Al Murtadha

The Life of Caliph ʻAli

Revised Edition
2015

Syed Abul Hasan ʻAli Nadwi

Translated by
Mohammed Moidul Haque

Contents

Translator's Note i

Foreword iii

Chapter 1- ʻAli in Makkah 1

The Tribe of Quraish 3

The Clan of Banu Hashim 4

ʻAbdul Muttalib bin Hashim 4

Abu Talib bin ʻAbdul Muttalib 6

Siblings of Sayyidna ʻAli 8

Talib bin Abi Talib 8

ʼAqeel bin Abi Talib 9

J'afar bin Abi Talib 10

Umm Hani bint Abi Talib 13

Jumanah bint Abi Talib 14

ʻAli bin Abi Talib 14

Birth 14

Guardianship of the Prophet (saw) 15

Acceptance of Islam 16

Abu Talib's Advice to ʻAli 17

Helping Those Who Came to Makkah to Know About Islam 18

The Greatest Honor 19

Migration 20

Chapter 2- ‘Ali in Madinah 23

Brotherhood 23

Marriage with Sayyidah Fatima 23

Financial Condition of ‘Ali and Fatima 24

Bearing Hardship for the Sake of the Prophet (saw) 27

Abu Turab – the Affectionate Nickname 28

Batttle of Badr 28

Battle of Uhad 29

Battle of Ditch and Valor of ‘Ali 31

Treaty of Hudaibiyah 33

Expedition of Khaybar 34

Combat with Marhab 34

Full Trust in the Words of the Prophet (saw) and Model of Perfect *Iman* 36

Prophet’s Laudatory Remarks 38

Mission to Yemen and Acceptance of Islam by Hamdan Tribe 38

Representing the Prophet and Humility 39

The Farewell *Hajj* and Prophet’s Speech at Ghadir Khum 40

Death of the Prophet (saw) 41

Chapter 3 - ‘Ali during Abu Bakr’s Caliphate 45

A Critical and Decisive Juncture 45

Fate of Ancient Religions 46
Judaism 46
Christianity 46
Hinduism 47
Buddhism 47
Zoroastrianism 47
Succession to the Prophet – Its Requirements and Demands 48
Abu Bakr – An Ideal Successor 49
1. The Prophet's Trust in Abu Bakr 50
2. Abu Bakr's Steadfastness 53
3. Abu Bakr's Deep Understanding of *Deen* 54
4. Abu Bakr's Commitment to Preserve *Deen* 54
5. Abu Bakr's Commitment to Implement *Deen* 56
6. Abu Bakr's Frugality 58
Consultative Administration and Caliphate of Abu Bakr 60
Monopoly of Priests in Other Religions 60
Reform that Islam Brought 62
Bay'ah (Oath of Allegiance) to Abu Bakr 65
The First Test for Abu Bakr and His Steadfastness 72
Sayyidah Fatima 76
'Ali's *Bay'ah* to Abu Bakr 80
Test for 'Ali and His Steadfastness 81

Ali's Cordial Relationship with Abu Bakr 82

Abu Bakr's Deep Regard for Prophet's Family 84

Life of Abu Bakr as the Caliph 85

Compilation of the Holy Quran 86

Ali's Reaction to Abu Bakr's Death 86

Chapter 4 - 'Ali during 'Umar's Caliphate 89

Nomination of 'Umar as the Caliph 89

Dismissal of Khalid bin Walid 90

Repudiation of 'Amr bin al-'Aas 91

Preservation of the Old Arab Lifestyle 91

Expansion of Islamic State under 'Umar 95

'Ali's Co-operation with 'Umar 95

'Ali's Concern for Islam and Muslims 96

'Umar's Travel to Jerusalem 101

Umar's Relationship with the Prophet's Household 102

Inception of Islamic Calendar 104

Martyrdom of Sayyidna 'Umar 105

Details of Sayyidna 'Umar's Martyrdom 107

Sayyidna 'Ali's Grief 108

Mutual Understanding among *Sahabah* 108

Chapter 5 - 'Ali during 'Uthman's Caliphate 111

Bay'ah to Sayyidna 'Uthman 111

‘Uthman’s standing in the Society 114
Respect for Sayyidna ‘Uthman 115
Conquests during ‘Uthman’s Caliphate 117
Righteous Caliphate of ‘Uthman 119
‘Uthman’s Greatest Achievement 120
Expansion of the Prophet’s *Masjid* 121
Torrent of Turmoil and Difficulties 121
Culmination of Mischief 126
Splinter Group in Egypt 126
Collusion between People of Egypt, Kufa and Basra 127
Siege and Martyrdom of ‘Uthman and ‘Ali’s Role in that Ordeal 130
Character of ‘Uthman and His High Status in Islam 134
Chapter 6 - ‘Ali during His Own Caliphate 137
Bay’ah at the Hands of ‘Ali 137
First Sermon of ‘Ali 138
Caliphate of ‘Ali and its challenges 140
Start of Dissension and the Battle of *Jamal* 143
‘Ali’s Respect for ‘Aisha, Talha and Zubair 145
Shift of Capital to Kufa 147
Differences among *Sahabah* 148
Conflict between ‘Ali and Mu’awiya 151
The Battle of Siffin 152

Tahkeem 155

Emergence of Khawarij (Kharijites) 156

‘Ali’s Acceptance of Tahkeem and Reaction of Khawarij 159

Khawarij and Saba’iyya 160

Khawarij 160

Saba’iyya 161

Example for *Ummah* in the Life of ‘Ali 165

Index of Quranic verses 187

Index of People and Places 189

Important Dates and Events 191

Works Cited 193

Translator's Note

All praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds, and His blessings be on Prophet Muhammad, his progeny and his Companions

This is a revised edition of the English translation of the book *Al Murtadha*[1] which is a biography of Sayyidna 'Ali (ra[2]), one of the most illustrious *Sahabah*[3] (Companions) of Prophet Muhammad (saw[4]). *Al Murtadha* was authored in Arabic by Syed Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi in 1988. It was translated into Urdu by Dr. 'Abdullah 'Abbas Nadwi and into English by S. Mohiuddin Ahmad.

Why do we need a revised edition? It is fact that most books in any language, original or translation, become fairly outdated over a period of time because languages and dialects keep on constantly changing; old words go out of usage and new ones take their place. The Holy Quran is the only exception to this rule merely because it is not a book written or produced by a human; it is the speech of Almighty Allah.

It is also a fact that an example, parable or proverb which may be easily understood by people of one culture and era may make no sense to people of another culture and era.

The first edition of the English translation of *Al Murtadha* was published over twenty-five years ago and its audience comprised mainly of those who were living in the Indian subcontinent or other Asian countries; they were not familiar with Arabic or Urdu; their mother tongue was a regional language such as Bengali, Gujarati, Punjabi or Tamil; and English, which happened to be the official language of their countries during the British

---

[1] المرتضى

[2] ra – *radi Allaho anh* (رضى الله عنه) means "May Allah be pleased with him." It is a prayer that is used for the Companions of Prophet Muhammad. It is *radi Allaho anhaa* (رضى الله عنها) for females.

[3] صحا به – Companions of the Prophet. It is the plural of صحا بى

[4] saw - ***s****al-lal-laahu-'****a****lihi-wa-****s****allam* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) means "Peace be upon Prophet Muhammad."

rule, was their second language. In short, the reading audience of the first English edition of the book was primarily made up of those whose first language was not English.

However over the last two to three decades, Muslims have migrated in large number to English-speaking countries such as Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the USA and English has become their first language, especially for their children who were born and raised in these countries. Thus this new population of Muslims is quite different from the one for which the first English edition of the book was intended.

It is generally true that the English translations (of Islamic books originally written in other languages) which were made two or three decades ago generally fail to meet the expectation of this new population of Muslims. The translations in order to make any impact on them need to be more cognizant of their taste, style and language. This revised edition of *Al Murtadha* is a humble attempt in that direction. May Allah accept this meager effort!

I am grateful to Syed Muhammad Rabey Hasani Nadwi (nephew of Syed Abul Hasan ʻAli Nadwi and current rector of Nadwatul ʻUlama, Lucknow, India) for granting me permission to revise the original English translation and publish it. I also like to thank all of those who have helped and encouraged me in completing this work. May Allah reward them immensely!

Mohammed Moidul Haque, Ph.D.
Former Professor of Computer Science
Northeastern Illinois University
Chicago, USA

27th June 2014 CE

Foreword

All praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds, and His blessings be on Prophet Muhammad, his progeny and his Companions

It is unfortunate that there have been many illustrious personalities throughout human history whose real character and accomplishments have remained in obscurity for long periods of time as historians did not do full justice in preserving and bringing to light their life story, challenges they faced, exemplary character they exhibited and great feats they accomplished. The task of preserving the life story of such great individuals was in fact a moral and religious obligation of those who claimed to be their devoted followers. But they also often failed in discharging that duty even though they sometimes went too far in extolling and glorifying them. In some cases, even decades, centuries and generations elapsed and the obligation (of bringing to light the life and character of such personalities) remained unfulfilled.

This misfortune (of not preserving and fully depicting the life of illustrious personalities) is not limited to persons of any particular religion, creed or era. There have been innumerable guides of humanity, reformers, nation-builders and luminaries of wisdom and knowledge who remained unknown to humanity for centuries. The world did not know much about them and only a few sketchy and exaggerated accounts kept them alive in the minds of people.

In case of some of those personalities, a single incident, political or otherwise, unduly gained so much importance that it eclipsed their entire life and obscured all other aspects of their character. In case of some, their followers and admirers associated with them all kinds of stories to fantasize them and portray them as superhuman. However, the right approach is that the lives of such personalities should be presented in such a way that the world gets a true picture of their character and they serve as a model to follow, at least for those who claim to be their admirers and followers.

In Islamic history, the life and character of those who belonged to the early period of Islam deserves to be presented in such a way that they stand out as special blessings of Allah and true disciples of Prophet Muhammad (saw); The life and character of the Companions of Prophet Muhammad

(saw) stand as indisputable proof that Islam possesses limitless capacity to transform ordinary human beings into extraordinary people. But it is unfortunate that a narrow barricade has been erected around the life of those esteemed personalities and it is considered an act of disrespect and infringement to embark upon further research and investigation into their lives.

'Ali bin Abi Talib (ra) happens to be one of those towering personalities whom history and its record keepers did not treat fairly. Historians have in general treated him very unjustly and harshly. His life and character has become enshrouded in deep layers of cynicism and distrust, the main culprits being the turbulent political climate that existed during his caliphate and the fanatic sect which vehemently opposed him.

Let alone unbiased scholars, even those, who claim to be 'Ali's most devoted followers and have built their entire faith and religion around his personality, did not care to study and investigate his life in an objective manner. They did not analyze the environment in which he was born and raised. They did not take into consideration the conditions and challenges which he was faced with. They did not look at how steadfastly he adhered to noble principles and values throughout his life. They did not look at how valiantly and fearlessly he faced difficulties and hardships. They did not look at how he maintained highest degree of moral decency and character in every situation. They did not look at what the main motive was behind his political and administrative decisions. They did not look at how unbending and uncompromising he was in maintaining the core principles of Islam. All these aspects of his life must be fully taken into consideration. Otherwise, the study of his life will remain incomplete and will most likely lead to wrong and misleading conclusions.

Distorted and unbalanced accounts of the lives of illustrious personalities are in reality the outcome of flawed methodology which historians and biographers usually employ. Historians and biographers often follow the beaten track of their predecessors and do not utilize new techniques of objective research and thorough investigation. They confine their study only to those sources which they can easily access and which are commonly considered to be pertinent to the subject. Rather, they should broaden their study and include those disciplines as well which are considered to be only remotely connected to the subject; one may find in other disciplines information which is very pertinent and valuable to the topic at hand. Lately, it has also become a trend that authors, in order to

publish their books in a hurry, just consult a handful of old books and do not bother to go through the rigors of thorough study and investigation.

It should be quite obvious to an experienced author and researcher in the discipline of history that the art of historiography is like excavating the ruins of an ancient royal palace. The ruins underneath the site contain everything that a keen and committed investigator needs. He will be able to find earthen vessels, ceramics, articles of daily use, leafs of inscription, precious stones and ornaments. He will also be able to find the columns and arches which had once supported the magnificent palace and formed part of its beauty and grandeur.

Those who desire to portray a true image of the palace with its majestic style and grandeur of the past must take the pain of digging out the relics themselves. If they rely solely on the work of others, they will not be able to fulfill the rights of historiography and they will fail to present a true picture of the palace and its surroundings.

There is no denying that every historian has his own taste, style, conviction and political inclination and it is often difficult to come out of the confines of one's personal biases and predispositions. Also, one may have access to a vast library, but may choose to limit his enquiry to only a few sections (of the library) of his liking for gathering information and drawing conclusions. Findings which come out of such biased works are often full of gaps, but they are still taken as the final verdict on the subject and authors of later generations use them as a model. However, the guiding principle of research and exploration should be what the ancient proverb suggests: Those who take the lead leave a lot to be explored by those who come later. Historiography always needs an explorer, as a poet has rightly said:

> Never think that the cup-bearer has finished the task
> The vine has a hundred drinks still untasted.

What inspired me to write this biography?

Sometime between 1955 and 1960, my dear elder brother Hakim Dr. Syed ʻAbdul ʻAli[5] (d. 1961) told me in a very aggrieved and heart-rending voice,

[5] Hakim Dr. Syed ʻAbdul ʻAli was a unique person. He had combined old traditions and knowledge with their modern counterparts in a very unique way. On

"'Ali, you should write a biography of Sayyidna 'Ali. Allah has blessed you with the ability to do it." My brother was my mentor and guardian since my father Hakim Syed 'Abdul Hai Hasani[6] died in 1923 when I was only nine years old.

At the time my brother asked me to write this biography, I was young and energetic and had already published biographies of several elders which amounted to over a thousand pages. But this was a very delicate and difficult task for me. Never before had I found myself so confounded and hesitant in writing a biography. It was a gigantic task which was full of sharp and dangerous twists and turns. It was more delicate and dangerous than treading a wire which was thinner than a hair and sharper than a razor blade. It required special help of Allah. It demanded a thorough and extensive study, an open mind, sound judgment and balanced approach. By remaining on the sea shore, one cannot fathom the challenges that a seaman faces in the middle of the ocean. In short, I could not ready myself to venture on this task during the lifetime of my dear brother and he departed from this world without seeing his wish fulfilled.

---

one hand, he was a very learned and conservative scholar of Islam. On the other hand, he was very well versed and highly educated in the modern system of education; he had studied both the Greek and Modern medicine and had a very successful medical practice. He was deeply committed to the beliefs of *Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama'ah* and never deviated from that. He passionately loved the Prophet (saw) and members of his household including Sayyidna 'Ali. He was the rector of Nadwatul 'Ulama for thirty years and Nadwatul 'Ulama made immense progress under his stewardship. His son Muhammad al-Hasani (d. 1979) was a renowned Arabic writer and journalist; he was the founding editor of the journal *al-Ba'as al-Isla*mi. Hakim Dr. Syed 'Abdul 'Ali passed away on 24 Dhul Qadah 1380 AH (7 May 1961).

[6] My father Hakim Syed 'Abdul Hai Hasani (former rector of Nadwatul 'Ulama) was a renowned scholar and historian. He had authored several important books on history, culture, literature and civilization of the Indian subcontinent. *Nuzhatul Khawatir* is one of his most famous books. It is a biographical sketch of more than 4,500 eminent scholars and *sufia* (mystics) of the subcontinent and spans over eight volumes. It has been published twice by Dairatul M'aarif 'Osmania of Hyderabad (India) and is considered an authentic book on the subject. His other works include *Al-Hind fil-Ahad al-Islami* (India during Islamic Rule), *al-Thaqafah al-Islamiyah fil-Hind* (Islamic literature in India), *Gul-e-Rana* (Anthology of Urdu Poetry) and Yade-Ayyam (History of Gujrat). He passed away on 16 Jumada II, 1341 AH (3 February 1923).

As the time passed by, I realized that there was a huge void in Islamic history and literature with respect to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra). I was shocked to find that there hardly existed any credible scholarly work that delved deep into his life, character and special qualities. Thus there was a genuine need for a book that expounded and shed light on major aspects of his life in detail. It required more than simply putting together information from existing sources in a new format. It required making use of modern methods of research and investigation. In short, the author must be unbiased, ambitious and willing to explore unchartered avenues of enquiry.

It is not easy to write about a legendary figure whose real personality has been turned into a mystery by misleading and controversial narratives by both his admirers and critics. Each group looks at Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) through its own lens to suit its own belief and ideology. Each group projects him in its own color making his images so dissimilar that they appear to represent different individuals who are known by the same name. The result is that his life story has become a jumble of conflicting images and fictions and his real personality and great qualities have become obscured[7].

At the time I considered embarking upon the daunting task of writing Sayyidna ‘Ali’s biography, I already had entered into advanced age, was faced with frail health and had too many commitments which required extensive travelling. Nevertheless, I set out on this journey by putting full trust in Allah with the hope of getting best rewards from Him. Once I made up my mind, I found myself so overwhelmed and occupied with it that I could not think of anything else. I also decided to write it in Arabic as I have done with many of my other writings.

I started the project by first examining and collecting relevant historical data. Thereafter I began writing the manuscript on March 01, 1988 (11th Rajab, 1408 AH) in Indore[8] at the residence of my friend Qazi Muhammad Moinullah Nadwi who was a former vice-chancellor of Nadwatul ‘Ulama.

---

[7] It is a matter of fairness and honesty to acknowledge that ‘*Abqariyat al-Imam* (Arabic) authored by the Egyptian scholar ‘Abbas Mahmud ’Aqqad (1889- 1964) is the best work which has been done so far on Sayyidna ‘Ali; it forms a part of the collection of ‘Aqqad’s articles which have been published under the title al-‘*Abqariyat al-Islamiyah. ‘Abqariyat al-Imam* is not a comprehensive biography of Sayyidna ‘Ali. It is only a comparative study.

[8] Indore is a city in the state of Madhya Pradesh, India.

Qazi Muhammad Moinullah Nadwi was very kind to provide all the amenities that I needed to do the work without any distraction. During that trip, I also stayed at the residences of my friends Malik Shah Nawaz and Molvi Abul Barakat Nadwi.

After a few days I returned from Indore to Lucknow and the work continued there and in my hometown Rae Bareli. Finally, with the help of Allah, I was able to complete the manuscript on May 31, 1988 (14th Shawwal[9] 1408) in Mumbai at the residence of my beloved friend Haji Ghulam Muhammad.

In this biography, I have also attempted to present in detail Sayyidna ‘Ali’s conduct during the caliphates of Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra), Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Uthman bin ‘Affan (ra), his relationship with them, political condition that existed during his own caliphate, issues that he had to deal with and how he handled them.

It becomes very clear that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) always stood by the three caliphs who preceded him and extended his full support to them. It also becomes evident that the political climate that dominated his regime was fully charged with turbulence and upheaval and the issues that he had to confront were extremely complex. Yet he remained firmly committed to upright values and never wavered in upholding core Islamic principles. The readers will see how immaculate and spotless his personal life was and how he remained a model of steadfastness and perseverance even in the most trying moments of his life.

I have also included short biographies of Sayyidna ‘Ali’s illustrious sons Sayyidna Hasan (ra) and Sayyidna Husain (ra). One can see their tremendous sacrifices and accomplishments, how they fulfilled the need of time and how valiantly they served Islam and Muslims. They indeed set unprecedented examples of truth, justice, selflessness and sincerity.

I have then given a brief account of the achievements of extraordinary people who came later in the progeny of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra). I have highlighted their lofty character and exemplary accomplishments. Readers will see how they strove and sacrificed to reform society and establish a just and upright Islamic system of governance.

[9] 10th month of the Hijri calendsr.

Readers will also see how Sayyidna ‘Ali’s descendants, after becoming unsuccessful in changing the course of government and suffering persecutions at the hands of rulers, focused more on spiritual and moral reform of society and the effort of *d’awah* (inviting people towards Islam) – the main objective of prophethood. One is astonished to see how their efforts transformed lives of common people and how they spread the message of Islam to all corners of the world.

Humanity is still benefiting from the treasures of Islam and the descendants of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) have played major role in keeping the torch of Islam alive and lighted – an aspect which many biographers have not paid much attention to.

At the end of the book, with great reluctance, a heavy heart, fear of being held accountable by Allah for any omission and hope for gaining reward from Him, I have dared to comment on certain misconstrued beliefs and doctrines which are being professed in the name of love and devotion for Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and his descendants. I have attempted to show that these creeds have nothing to do with Islam or Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and they are simply creations of un-Islamic forces and external influences.

In short, it is a humble attempt to present the life of an exceptionally great human being (Sayyidna ‘Ali) who was trained and nurtured by the greatest benefactor and teacher Prophet Muhammad (saw). It is also an attempt to present an account of one of the most turbulent and tumultuous eras of Islamic history.

In writing this biography, I have adhered to two basic principles. Firstly, I have relied only on those sources which are widely deemed authentic. Secondly, I have provided full references to the sources which I have cited.

I find it necessary to express gratitude to my dear friend ‘Ateeq Ahmad Bastawi, a teacher at Nadwatul ‘Ulama, for assisting me in researching pertinent material. I must also thank Nisarul Haq Nadwi and Muhammad Haroon Nadwi who worked diligently to edit and type the manuscript.

Finally I must thank and praise Almighty Allah who enabled me to complete this work. May Allah make it beneficial for me as well as for the readers of this biography! Verily, Allah has power over everything. I am hopeful that He will accept this meager effort.

Syed Abul Hasan ‘Ali Nadwi
Mumbai, India

21st Shawwal 1408 AH
7th June 1988 AD

Chapter 1- ‘Ali in Makkah

Anatomy, psychology, ethics and sociology all agree that certain traits and qualities run in humans through blood and family for generations and what a person inherits from his ancestors plays a major role in shaping his character, ability, natural instincts and mindset. Inherited traits and qualities come mainly from three sources:

1. Beliefs and values which are very dear and sacred to the family; those beliefs and values are so cherished and revered that any family member who defies them is considered a rebel and such an action is deemed absolutely unforgivable.
2. What a person frequently hears from his parents and other members of the household; stories of bravery, generosity, and truthfulness that a person continuously hears since his childhood leave a lasting impression on his character and thinking.
3. Physical makeup, appearance and habits; families which are particular about preserving their blood and lineage often succeed in preserving these features as well.

Arab poets have spoken of hereditary traits frequently. Rabi’ah bin Marqum[1], a famous poet from the tribe of Mudir says:

> Noble sons are like gold pieces shining in the morning rain, to be picked up at once on being spotted

Another famous poet Hutaiyah says:

> They come from the tribe whose horsemen charge heroically in battle. They tear the veils of darkness. They have inherited these traits from their forefathers.

These rules (regarding transfer of hereditary traits down the progeny) are not absolute though they are generally true in

[1] He had seen both the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods and his poetry is included in the famous Arabic anthology *Hamasa*.

normal circumstances. They are not like the immutable laws of Allah which the following verse of the Holy Quran refers to:

فَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ ٱللَّهِ تَبۡدِيلاۚ وَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ ٱللَّهِ تَحۡوِيلاً

> So you will never find in Allah’s practice any change, and you will never find in Allah’s practice any diversion (Fatir, 35:43)

On one hand, pedigree does matter, as has been mentioned in the following *hadith*:

> Abu Hurairah (ra) reported that Allah's Messenger (saw) said: People are like mines of silver and gold. Those who were excellent in *jahiliya* (days of ignorance) are also excellent in Islam. (Muslim 1994, Book of Virtues, Good Manners and Joining Ties of Kinship)

On the other hand, pedigree does not suffice if one does not excel in deeds, as has been mentioned in the following *hadith*:

> Abu Hurairah (ra) reported that Allah’s Messenger (saw) said: Whoever has fallen behind in (doing) deeds cannot be pushed forward by his lineage. (Muslim 1994, Book of Remembrance of Allah, Supplication, Repentance and Seeking Forgiveness)

A family, tribe or race cannot claim a position of respect and honor simply because of its lineage. Religious, spiritual and intellectual leadership is not the sole property of any specific family, tribe or race and there is no guarantee that it will remain with that entity forever.

It thus becomes our duty to objectively and unbiasedly analyze the facts surrounding the family, tribe and society in which Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was born and raised. We need to look at the distinctive qualities that his family and tribe possessed; the customs and traditions which were in vogue at that time; and how his family and tribe were looked at by other families and tribes (Nadwi, Muhammad Rasulullah, The Apostle of Mercy 2001, 33-50). We will first look at the tribe of Quraish and then at the clan of Banu Hashim.

The Tribe of Quraish

The entire Arab world was unanimous about the nobility of Quraish and there was no difference of opinion among Arabs in this regard. Quraish were considered to be the standard bearers of eloquence and speech. They were known for their bravery, courage, hospitality and generosity.

There were several clans within the tribe of Quraish and they were closely allied with each other. They all cherished their tribal characteristics and strictly adhered to them. They mostly followed the creed and traditions of Prophet Ibrahim (*alaihis salaam* [2]). They were not like Bedouins (dwellers of desert) who had no religion and lacked any social or financial standing.

Some of the distinctive customs and practices of Quraish were: they loved their children (a quality not prevalent among Bedouins); they performed *tawaaf* (circumambulation) around the *K’aba*[3]; they performed rituals of *hajj*; they enshrouded and buried corpses; and they took bath to clean themselves after having conjugal relationship.

Unlike the Brahmins of India and fire-worshippers of Persia, Quraish did not have any priestly class for the purpose of administering their religious customs. They used to marry in distant clans (within their own tribe). They used to fix *mahr* (bridal money) and appoint witnesses for their marriages. They deemed it necessary to pronounce *talaaq* (divorce) thrice before it became effective. Unlike the Zoroastrians of Persia, they did not marry their daughters, nieces or sisters; they used to consider it a shameful act. The Holy Quran has appreciated many of their traditions and *shari’ah* (Islamic code of conduct) has preserved many of them.

Quraish were so revered by other tribes that they could marry in any family or tribe they wished. But they always put the condition that the family or tribe that they were marrying into must have the same religious beliefs and traditions. They deemed it unacceptable and dishonorable to marry into a family or tribe that was not at par with them with respect to values, beliefs and traditions.

---

[2] *alaihis salaam* means “peace be upon him” which is used for prophets.

[3] K’aba is the cube-shaped structure in Makkah inside the Grand Mosque. It is also known as Baitullah, the House of Allah.

The Clan of Banu Hashim

Banu Hashim was regarded as the most noble and prestigious clan in the tribe of Quraish. It was known for its wisdom, intelligence and moderate temperament. It was very firm in its religious beliefs. It firmly believed in the sanctity of Baitullah[4]. It abhorred oppression and wrongdoing. It detested stubbornness and obstinacy. It was very bold and courageous. It helped the poor section of society. It was generous and charitable. In short, it possessed knightly qualities of chivalry – courage, honor, generosity, helping the weak and protecting the women.

The qualities which Banu Hashim possessed made them worthy of being the ancestors[5] of Prophet Muhammad (saw). Their habits and manners were quite compatible with the teachings of Islam. However, it is also true that due to their long association with other tribes, they had adopted some of the pagan customs and practices.

‘Abdul Muttalib bin Hashim

‘Abdul Muttalib (the grandfather of Sayyidna ‘Ali) was the son of Hashim and nephew of Muttalib[6]. Muttalib was in-charge of the department of *as-Saqayah* and *ar-Rifada* which was responsible for providing water, food and lodging to pilgrims who came to Makkah during the season of *hajj*. After Muttalib passed away, his nephew, ‘Abdul Muttalib was appointed in his place as the head of the department of *as-Saqayah* and *ar-Rifada*. ‘Abdul Muttalib performed this duty is such an exemplary manner that he earned respect and recognition which far exceeded the prestige of his ancestors.

‘Abdul Muttalib was not as rich as his grandfather Qusayy. Nor was he the sole leader of his tribe. There were many others in Makkah who were richer than him and enjoyed greater influence and authority. But he was

---

[4] Baitullah (House of Allah) is the cube-shaped structure in Makkah inside the Grand Mosque.

[5] Like Prophets Ibrahim and Ismail.

[6] Hashim and Muttalib were brothers. Hashim had four sons and six daughters. Abdul Muttalib was one of the sons of Hashim. Abdul Muttalib had ten sons and six daughters. His sons included ‘Abdullah (father of Prophet Muhammad) and Abu Talib (father of Sayyidna ‘Ali).

regarded as a person of very high standing due to his excellent reputation as the head of the department of *as-Saqayah* and *ar-Rifada*. Since the supervision of the well of Zamzam also fell within his duties, it further enhanced his prestige due to the special status of the well of Zamzam in Baitullah.

How much did ‘Abdul Mattalib venerate and revere Baitullah? How strongly did he believe in K’aba being the house of Allah and Allah being its real Protector and Caretaker? One can gauge the level of his conviction by examining the conversation that he had with the Abyssinian king Abraha who came to Makkah to demolish K’aba in 571 CE, about fifty or fifty-five days before the birth of Prophet Muhammad (saw). That year is known as the Year of the Elephant.

When the army of Abraha captured and took away 200 camels of ‘Abdul Mattalib, he went to the camp of Abraha to negotiate his camels’ release. Abraha treated him respectfully by getting off his throne and making him sit by his side. When Abraha asked him as to what was the reason of his coming, ‘Abdul Mattalib said, “I want you to return my camels which your men have taken away.” Upon that, Abraha looked at ‘Abdul Mattalib with great disdain and said, “You have come to negotiate for your 200 camels, but you do not care about the house which is so revered by you and your forefathers and I have come to demolish it.” ‘Abdul Mattalib then replied, “I am the owner of these camels. This house also has an owner and he will protect it.” Abraha said, “That owner cannot stop me from demolishing it.” ‘Abdul Mattalib then said, “It is between you and Him.”

‘Abdul Mattalib used to advise his children not to engage in acts of oppression, immorality and indecency. He used to encourage them to remain steadfast on good manners and decent behavior.

‘Abdul Muttalib was more than 80 years old when he passed away in about 578 AD. At the time of his death, Prophet Muhammad (saw) was eight years old. Historians have recorded that markets were closed for several days to mourn his death as a mark of respect for him.

Abu Talib bin ‘Abdul Muttalib

Abu Talib (father of Sayyidna ‘Ali) was born in around 535 CE (88 BH[7]), about 35 years before the birth of Prophet Muhammad (saw). Though his real name is reported to be ‘Abd Munaf, ‘Imran or Shaiba, he became famous by his surname Abu Talib[8]. He was one of the chieftains of Quraish. He often acted as an arbitrator in resolving disputes among people. People approached him to seek his advice and counsel.

Abu Talib and ‘Abdullah, the father of Prophet Muhammad (saw), were from the same mother and father. Their father was‘Abdul Mattalib bin Hashim and their mother was Fatima bint ‘Amr bin ‘Aidh bin ‘Imran bin Makhzoom.

‘Abdul Muttalib (grandfather of Prophet Muhammad), at the time of his death, gave Prophet Muhammad (saw) under the guardianship of Abu Talib and instructed Abu Talib to take special care of Prophet Muhammad (saw). The Prophet (saw) was nine years old at the time of ‘Abdul Muttalib’s death. Abu Talib fulfilled this obligation in an exceptional manner and brought up Prophet Muhammad (saw) as his own son.

Abu Talib was not a wealthy person, but he took care of his nephew (i.e. Prophet Muhammad) more than his own sons. He loved him more than his own children. He made him sleep by his side and took him wherever he went. While feeding, he gave preference to him over his own children. Abu Talib stood by his nephew at all times and supported him in all circumstances.

Once when Abu Talib got ready for a trade trip to Syria, Prophet Muhammad (saw) became very sad due to the ensuing separation from his uncle. Abu Talib could not bear the sight and said, “By God, neither I can leave this child behind, nor can he tolerate separation from me. I will definitely take him along with me.” It is reported that Abu Talib took the Prophet (saw) with him in that trip.

---

[7] BH stands for “Before Hijrah.”

[8] It was a tradition among Arabs that a person was known as the father of his first child. Since Talib was the first child of the Prophet’s uncle, he was known as Abu Talib which means father of Talib. Abu in Arabic means father.

The Prophet (saw) used to say about his aunt Fatima bint Asad (ra), the wife of Abu Talib, “After the death of my mother who gave birth to me, she was my mother. Whenever Abu Talib invited guests for a feast, he would include me as well. But she would save for me a part of the meal which I would eat later.” According to Abu ‘Amr, she was the first woman in the family of Hashim to bear a child.

Fatima bin Asad (ra) embraced Islam and migrated to Madinah. When she passed away, the Prophet (saw) shrouded her body with his own shirt and laid himself down in the grave before putting her body there; he did so to show respect and gratitude for her.

When the Prophet (saw) started preaching Islam openly and condemned idols and idolatry, the people of Makkah became very upset. They all became united in opposing the Prophet (saw), but Abu Talib continued protecting and supporting him.

When the situation became very tense between the Prophet (saw) and the idolaters of Makkah, the chieftains of Quraish came to Abu Talib and said, “You are our elder and an honorable chief. We admire and respect you. We had requested you to stop your nephew from preaching the new religion, but you did not do so. Now we have reached a point where we cannot tolerate any more insult to our forefathers and gods and cannot allow our self-esteem and intelligence trampled over. Now you must stop him from what he is doing. Or, be prepared to face off with us until either you or we get perished.”

Abul Talib told the Prophet (saw) about the conversation that he had with the chieftains of Quraish and implored him to be considerate to him as well as to himself. Upon that, the Prophet (saw) replied, “My dear uncle! If they put the sun in one of my hands and the moon in the other, I will not forsake the mission that I have undertaken. I will continue this task until either Allah makes it dominant over all other religions or I perish therein.” Abu Talib replied, “My dear son! Continue your mission and continue saying what you want to say. By God, I will never hand you over to them.”

When Islam started spreading, the chieftains of Quraish got together and decided to prepare a document to impose a boycott of the clans of Banu Hashim and Banu Muttalib. According to that document, other tribes and clans could neither marry into Banu Hashim and Banu Muttalib; nor could they do any buying or selling with them. They hanged that document on the inner wall of K’aba and all the clans (except Banu Hashim and Banu

Muttalib) strictly observed it. The boycott forced Abu Talib and the clans of Banu Hashim and Banu Muttalib to take shelter in a narrow pass which came to be known as the Shi‘b of Abu Talib.

The boycott had started in the month of Muharram[9] of the seventh year of the Prophet’s mission. It lasted for three years during which Abu Talib along with the members of Banu Hashim and Banu Muttalib clans remained confined in the narrow pass. During that period, nothing reached them except a few things which some sympathizers would secretly smuggle into the pass. Finally when the document was eaten up by worms, the covenant was automatically annulled.

In the middle of the month of Shawwal[10] of the tenth year of the Prophet’s mission, Abu Talib passed away; he was about eighty-six years old at the time of his death; he had not accepted Islam[11]. The Prophet’s wife Khadija (ra) also passed away in the same year. Because the two persons who were closest to the Prophet (saw) died in the same year, the Prophet (saw) used to call that year as the year of grief.

Siblings of Sayyidna ‘Ali

Abu Talib had four sons – Talib, ‘Aqeel, J’afar and ‘Ali - and two daughters – Umm Hani and Jumanah. All of them were born to Fatima bint Asad (ra) and each of them was born at the interval of ten years. Thus ‘Ali was ten years younger than J’afar.

Talib bin Abi Talib

Talib was the oldest son of Abu Talib; that is why his father was known as Abu Talib. Though Talib died as a polytheist, he used to love the Prophet (saw) profusely and had composed several verses praising the Prophet

[9] Muharram is the first month of the Hijri calendar.
[10] Shawwal is the tenth month of the Hijri calendar.
[11] Books of *hadith* and history support the view that Abu Talib did not accept Islam and it was a matter of enormous grief for the Prophet (saw). But it also proves that Islam is a religion of faith and principle and it does not favor someone just because of family ties or personal relationship. One must accept the divine message that the Prophet (saw) brought. Without fulfilling this requirement, mere love or support for the Prophet (saw) is of no avail.

(saw). According to a narration, he had gone out on a journey from which he never came back and remained traceless.

Talib had accompanied the polytheists of Makkah when they set out for Badr to fight the Prophet (saw) and Muslims, but he had done so only reluctantly and under pressure. Thus when they sarcastically told him, “O the son of Hashim, we know it very well that though you have come with us, your sympathy lies with Muhammad,” he returned to Makkah without taking part in the battle. He later composed a few verses in praise of the Prophet (saw) and an elegy for those who were killed in the Battle of Badr.

’Aqeel bin Abi Talib

‘Aqeel bin Talib (ra) was the second son of Abu Talib. He was commonly known as Abu Yazid. He was born in around 44 BH (580 CE). He accepted Islam at the time of the conquest of Makkah in 8AH; according to another narration, he accepted Islam in 6 AH after the signing of the treaty of Hudaibiyah and migrated from Makkah to Madinah in the beginning of 8 AH.

In the Battle of Badr (2 AH), he was captured by Muslims as a war prisoner and his uncle ‘Abbas bin ‘Abdul Muttalib (ra) paid ransom for his freedom. He participated in the expedition of Mu’tah (8 AH). According to Ibn S’ad al-Baghdadi (784-845 CE, 168-230 AH), he did not take part in the conquest of Makkah or the Battle of Hunain (8 AH), maybe because he was sick in those days. But Zubair bin Bakkar has stated on the authority of Hasan bin ‘Ali (ra) that he stood firm by the side of the Prophet (saw) in the Battle of Hunain.

‘Aqeel (ra) was very dear to his father Abu Talib. Once when Makkah was under the grip of a severe drought and famine, the Prophet (saw) and his uncle ‘Abbas (ra) went to Abu Talib and offered to ease his burden by taking care of his children. Abu Talib responded by saying, “Leave ‘Aqeel with me and divide his other siblings among yourselves as you like.” The Prophet (saw) took the responsibility of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and ‘Abbas (ra) took J’afar (ra) with him

‘Aqeel (ra) was an expert in the genealogy of Quraish and he knew their psyche and traits very well. People used to come to him in the Prophet’s Mosque to enquire about their ancestry. He was very sharp and witty and would silence the questioner very quickly.

Hisham al-Kalabi reported on the authority of ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas (ra) that people used to refer their cases for arbitration and settlement to four persons in Quraish – ‘Aqeel, Makhramah, Huwaitib and Abu Jahm.

According to Ibn S’ad al-Baghdadi, ‘Aqeel (ra) died during the reign of Caliph Mu’awiya (661-680 CE). However *Tarikh al-Bukhari al-Asghar* contains a report with complete chain of narrators that he died during the reign of Yazid I (680-683 CE) before the Battle of al-Harrah; he was 96 years old when he died and had lost his eyesight.

He had twelve sons including those nine who had sided with Husain (ra) in the Battle of Karbala (680 CE, 61 AH) against Yazid I. All nine of them were martyred; Muslim bin ‘Aqeel (ra) was the bravest among them; he is the one who was sent by Husain (ra) to Kufa where he was savagely killed by Ibn Ziyad.

J’afar bin Abi Talib

J’afar bin Abi Talib (ra) was among those fortunate individuals who had embraced Islam in its very early days[12]. He was born in about 33 BH (590 CE). When brotherhood was instituted by the Prophet (saw) in Madinah between *Muhajirin*[13] and *Ansar*[14], J’afar (ra) was paired with Mu’adh bin Jabal (ra).

Abu Hurairah (ra) said that J’afar (ra) was the best person after the Prophet (saw). It is mentioned in *Sahih Bukhari*[15] that J’afar (ra) was most generous and kind to the poor. Khalid al-Hadh-dha has reported on the authority of ‘Ikramah (ra) that Abu Hurairah (ra) used to say that J’afar (ra) was the best person after the Prophet (saw) among those who walked and rode

[12] Ibn S’ad writes in *Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra* that J’afar accepted Islam before the Prophet (saw) started preaching Islam openly.
[13] مهاجرين - those who had migrated from Makkah to Madinah.
[14] انصا ر - residents of Madinah.
[15] *Sahih Bukhari* is a collection of *ahadith* compiled by Muhammad ibn Ismail Bukhari.

horses on the face of the earth[16]; this narration appears in *Jame Tirmidhi*[17] and *Sunan al-Nisai*[18] with authentic chain of narrators.

Al-Baghawi[19] has reported on the authority of Abu Hurairah (ra) that J’afar (ra) loved the poor and destitute; he sat with them; he served them and they served him; he conversed with them and they conversed with him.

The Prophet (saw) used to call J’afar (ra) by the nickname *Abul Masakeen* (father of the poor). The Prophet (saw) used to say to him, “You resemble me in appearance as well as in habits.”

J’afar (ra) migrated to Abyssinia where King Negus and his men accepted Islam on his hand. When he returned to Madinah shortly after the expedition of Khaybar (in 7 AH), the Prophet (saw) received him warmly, kissed his forehead and remarked, “I cannot say what has pleased me more: arrival of J’afar or the conquest of Khaybar.”

‘Abdullah bin J’afar (ra) said, “When I put a question to ‘Ali, he did not answer my question. I then mentioned the name of J’afar and ‘Ali immediately answered my question.”

J’afar (ra) was martyred while fighting valiantly in the Battle of Mu’tah in the month of Jumadah I, 8 AH (629 CE) during the lifetime of the Prophet (saw). Riding on his checkered horse, he fiercely fought the enemy; he then got off the horse, let it go loose, jumped into the thick of enemy and fought until got martyred.

Ibn ‘Amr (ra) said, “I was among those who had fought in the Battle of Mu’tah. When we were searching for the corpses of our dead comrades, we found J’afar’s body with more than ninety wounds on his face, chest and abdomen that were inflicted by arrows and swords.”

---

[16] It is a way of saying that no one except the Prophet was better than J’afar.

[17] *Jame Tirmidhi* is a collection of *ahadith* compiled by Muhammad ibn Isa Tirmidhi.

[18] *Sunan al-Nisai* is a collection of *ahadith* compiled by Aḥmad ibn Shu’aib al-Nasai.

[19] Al-Baghawi (436-516 AH) was a renowned scholar of *hadith* and *tafseer*. He is author the famous *hadith* book *Mishkat al-Masabih*.

According to a *hadith* reported by Abul Qasim Sulaiman bin Ahmad al-Tabarani (873-970 CE, 260-360 AH) on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas (ra), the Prophet (saw) said, “I saw J’afar flying by the side of angels in Paradise.” In another version of *hadith,* the Prophet (saw) is reported to have said, “I saw J’afar as an angel whose both wings were blood-stained because both of his arms were severed in the battle.”

When the troops returned from Mu’tah, the Prophet (saw) and Muslims received them on the outskirts of Madinah. Among those who had come out to welcome the troops were their children as well. The Prophet (saw) instructed the troops to pick up their children and asked that ‘Abdullah, the son of J’afar, be brought to him. Thus ‘Abdullah was brought to the Prophet (saw) who was riding on his camel and the Prophet (saw) picked ‘Abdullah up in his lap.

‘Aisha (ra) narrated that when the Prophet (saw) heard the news of J’afar’s death, the deep grief that he felt was quite visible on his face. He said to the family members of J’afar, “Bring the children of my brother to me.” J’afar’s children who looked like tiny birds were brought to him. He then sent for a barber and got their hair cut. Thereafter he told their mother, “Are you worried about their maintenance and upbringing? I am their guardian and I will take care of them in this life as well as in the Hereafter.”

In another narration, it is reported that the Prophet (saw) told J’afar’s wife to bring her children to him. When they came, he sniffed them and his eyes became filled with tears.

When the Prophet (saw) got the news of J’afar’s death, he instructed his own family members to prepare food for J’afar’s family saying that J’afar’s family had been struck with such a tragedy that they were unable to do anything[20].

‘Abdullah, the son of J’afar, was the first child born to a Muslim couple. He was born in Abyssinia in 1 AH. He was known for his charity and generosity. He had two brothers – Muhammad and ‘Awn.

[20] After that incident, it became a tradition that close relatives would send food to the household in which a family member had died.

When Negus, the king of Abyssinian, asked the Muslims who had migrated to his country from Makkah, “What is that religion due to which you have left your people and have not accepted any other religion?” On that occasion, J’afar (ra) stood up and described the condition of the days of ignorance in such a manner that an exact picture of the Makkan society emerged in front of the audience. He also explained what changes Islam had brought into the lives of those who had come into its fold. In his presentation, he was very careful not to say anything that could provoke any controversy or offend the king or his courtiers who were strong followers and preachers of Christianity. His reply was very appropriate to the occasion and stood as a brilliant testimony to his wisdom, understanding and articulation – the skills which Quraish and Banu Hashim were known for.

Umm Hani bint Abi Talib

Umm Hani (ra) was one of the two sisters of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra). Her real name has been reported to be Fakhitah, Fatima or Hind; Fakhitah is more famous than the other two. She was married to Hubayra bin ‘Aaidh al-Makhzumi. Once the Prophet, alluding to her, said, “Of all the women who ride camels[21], the women of Quraish are the best and they are most kind to their children.”

Abu ‘Umar reported that after the conquest of Makkah (in 8 AH), Umm Hani’s husband Hubayra fled to Najran and composed a few couplets giving reasons of his escape. Later when he came to know about Umm Hani’s acceptance of Islam, he composed couplets in response to that. He had a son name ‘Amr from Umm Hani; that is why he was known as Abu ‘Amr.

On the day of the conquest of Makkah, Umm Hani (ra) had given protection to two persons from the tribe of Makhzum whom Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had threatened to kill. When the Prophet (saw) came to Makkah, he greeted Umm Hani (ra) and asked her, “What is the matter?” When she told the Prophet (saw) that she had given protection to those two persons, he said, “I give protection to whomsoever you give protection and I give shelter to whosoever you give shelter. We will not kill the two men whom you have given protection.”

[21] “Women who ride camels” meant those women who were free and belonged to noble families.

Umm Hani (ra) reported that the Prophet (saw) came to her house on the day of the conquest of Makkah, took bath and prayed eight *rak’ah* (units) of *salat* there. Umm Hani (ra) has narrated several *hadith* which have been reported in the *Sihah Sitta*[22] (six most authentic books of *hadith*) and other books of *hadith*.

Tirmidhi (824-892 CE, 209-279 AH) has reported that Umme Hani (ra) was alive when Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was martyred in 40 AH; she died in 41 AH.

Jumanah bint Abi Talib

Jumanah (ra), the second daughter of Abu Talib, was the mother of ‘Abdullah bin Abu Sufyan. Her husband Abu Sufyan was the son of Abu Talib’s brother Harith.

The renowned historian Ibn Ishaq (d. 761 or 767 CE) has written that Jumanah was among the recipients of the booty of the Battle of Khaybar and had received thirty *dasaq*[23] of grains.

‘Ali bin Abi Talib

Birth

There are several authentic narrations according to which Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was born in 600 CE (23 BH), ten years before Prophet Muhammad (saw) proclaimed prophethood. According to Ibn S’ad al-Baghdadi, he was born after twelve nights of the month of Rajab in the thirtieth year after the alleged invasion of K’aba by the Abyssinian king Abraha. Hakim writes that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was born to Fatima bint Asad in the premises of K’aba. Another person born in the premises of K’aba was Hakim bin Hazim.

Izz al-Din ibn Abi al-Hadid (d. 1258 CE, 656 AH) has written in *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*[24]: There is a difference of opinion regarding the place

[22] *Sihah Sitta* consists of *Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan Abu Dawud, Al-Jame Tirmidhi, Sunan Ibn Majah and Sunan al-Nisai.*
[23] *Dasaq* is a unit of weight which is equal to about 200 kilograms.

where Sayyidna ‘Ali was born. A large group of Shi’as believes that he was born inside the K’aba, but the scholars of *hadith* have not accepted this view. They hold the opinion that the person who was born in the K’aba was Hakim bin Hazim bin Khuwaylid bin Asad bin ‘Abdul ‘Izza bin Qusayy. (al-Hadid 2004)

Guardianship of the Prophet (saw)

Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (839-923 CE, 224-310 AH), a renowned historian and scholar, has written on the authority of Mujahid that the severe famine which had gripped Quraish became the apparent reason for Allah’s extraordinary blessing to come to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) in the form of the guardianship of the Prophet (saw).

Abu Talib, the father of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had a large family. The Prophet (saw) told his uncle ‘Abbas (ra) who was among the richest people of Quraish, “Uncle, your brother Abu Talib has a large family and you know what kind of hardship people are facing. Let us go and ease his burden by taking care of some of his children.” ‘Abbas (ra) replied, “That is alright.” So they went to Abu Talib and said to him, “We have come to you so that we can ease your hardship by taking care of some of your children.” Abu Talib said, “Leave ‘Aqeel with me and do whatever you decide for the rest.” Upon that, the Prophet (saw) took ‘Ali’s responsibility and ‘Abbas (ra) took J’afar’s.

From that time on, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) lived with the Prophet (saw). Later when Prophet Muhammad (saw) proclaimed his prophethood, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) accepted his call and remained loyal to him throughout his life. On the other hand, J’afar stayed with ‘Abbas (ra) until conditions improved and financial help was no more needed.

---

[24] *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* is a commentary on the book *Nahj al-Balaghah* (The Path of Eloquence) which is a collection of sermons, letters and short sayings of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra). It was compiled by Sayyid Sharif al-Radi (970-1015 CE, 359-404 AH) and it still continues to be a source of both religious and literary inspiration for both Shi’ites and Sunnis.

Acceptance of Islam

Ibn Ishaq writes that one day when ‘Ali (ra) came to the house of the Prophet (saw), he saw both the Prophet and his wife Khadija (ra) praying. Upon that ‘Ali said, “What is this?” The Prophet (saw) replied, “This is the religion that Allah has chosen (for us) and He sends prophets to propagate it. I invite you to the Almighty who is the only god and has no partner.” ‘Ali said, “This is something that I have never heard before. I cannot decide anything until I have talked to my father Abu Talib.”

The Prophet (saw) did not like ‘Ali’s reply as he did not want this secret to be disclosed at that time. Thus he said to ‘Ali, “If you are not ready to accept it, keep it to yourself.”

‘Ali kept quiet for the night, but Allah implanted Islam in his heart. Next morning, he came to the Prophet (saw) and said, “What is that which you had invited me towards yesterday? The Prophet (saw) said, “Bear witness that there is no god except Allah. He is the only god. Reject al-Lat and al-Uzza (the two idols which Makkans used to worship). Renounce all partners to Allah.” ‘Ali then recited the *Kalimah Shahadah*[25] and entered into the fold of Islam. ‘Ali continued coming to the Prophet (saw) without letting Abu Talib know and kept his Islam secret on the advice of the Prophet (saw). (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

It is widely believed that ‘Ali was next only to Khadija in accepting Islam and he was the first male to have offered *salat* (prayers) behind the Prophet (saw). Zaid bin Arqam (ra) narrated that ‘Ali was the first person to have entered Islam. ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas (ra) narrated that the first person who accepted Islam after Khadijah was ‘Ali. Muhammad bin ‘Abdur Rahman Zararah narrated that ‘Ali entered Islam at the age of nine. Mujahid narrated that ‘Ali was the first person who prayed *salat* with the Prophet (saw) and he was ten years old at that time. Hasan bin Zaid narrated that ‘Ali never worshipped idols.

There are plenty of circumstantial evidences which point to the fact that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was indeed the first male to have come into the fold of Islam. He had opened his eyes in the household which was destined to

[25] لاَ اِلَهَ اِلّا اللّٰهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُوْل اللّٰهِ means that there is no god except Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger.

become the source of guidance for entire mankind. He was raised from his very childhood under the auspicious guardianship of the Prophet (saw) who was destined to be the divine guide, teacher and benefactor of entire humanity and whose message was to spread all over the world.

Ibn Kathir (1301-1373 CE), in his famous book *Al Bidayah wan Nihayah*, has written in detail that when the Quranic verse[26] وَأَنذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ ٱلْأَقْرَبِينَ was revealed, the Prophet (saw) invited all the descendants of ‘Abdul Muttalib for a meal and presented Islam to them. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was the only person who had accepted Islam on that occasion. Most historians hold the opinion that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was eleven years old when he accepted Islam and twenty-three years old when he migrated from Makkah to Madinah.

Some scholars, after examining all the relevant narrations, have concluded that Khadija (ra) was the first female, Abu Bakr (ra) was the first adult male and ‘Ali (ra) was the first youngster to accept Islam. However, ‘Ali (ra) in the funeral speech that he delivered at the time of Abu Bakr’s death himself acknowledged that Abu Bakr (ra) had embraced Islam before anyone else.

Abu Talib’s Advice to ‘Ali

Ibn Ishaq has reported that when the prayer time would come in, the Prophet (saw) would go to one of the valleys of Makkah to perform his prayers. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), making sure that his father, uncles and other relatives did not know about it, joined the Prophet (saw) in the valley, prayed together and remained with him until late evening. This continued for some time.

One day when the Prophet (saw) and ‘Ali (ra) were praying together in a valley, Abu Talib came there and saw them praying. Abu Talib asked the Prophet (saw), “My dear nephew, what is that religion which you are practicing?” The Prophet (saw) replied, “My dear uncle, this is the religion of Allah, His angels, His prophets and our forefather Ibrahim.”

[26] Meaning: Admonish your nearest kinsmen [Al-Shuara, 26:214].

According to another narration, the Prophet (saw) said, “Allah has sent me to people as His messenger. My dear uncle, you are the most deserving person to be presented with this religion.” Abu Talib replied, “I cannot abandon the religion and practices of my forefathers. But by God, you will not be put to any harm as long as I am alive.”

Biographers the Prophet (saw) have also related that Abu Talib asked his son ‘Ali, “O son, what is that religion which you are practicing?” ‘Ali replied, “O my father, I have already affirmed *iman*[27] (faith) in Allah and His Prophet. I pray with the Prophet and follow him.” It is reported that Abu Talib then said to ‘Ali, “Muhammad always calls you towards good. So follow him.”

Helping Those Who Came to Makkah to Know About Islam

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) used to help and guide those who would come to Makkah to know about Islam. He would take them to the Prophet (saw). Allah had blessed him with special acumen and keen intelligence (which his clan Banu Hashim was known for) to guide people. The following story of Abu Dhar Ghiffari’s coming to Islam has been reported in *Sahih Bukhari* on the authority of ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas. (Bukhari 1986, Book of the Merits of the Prophet and his Companions)

When Abu Dhar Ghiffari came to know about the prophethood of Muhammad (saw), he said to his brother, "Ride to that valley and bring me the news of this man (i.e. the Prophet Muhammad) who claims to be a prophet receiving revelation from the Heaven. Listen to him and then come to me." Abu Dhar’s brother went to Makkah, met the Prophet, listened to him, returned back to Abu Dhar and said to him, "I found him exhorting people to good manners and his speech was not poetry." Abu Dhar said, "You could not tell me what I wanted to know.” So, Abu Dhar took some food and a bag of water with him and set out for Makkah by himself. He reached Haram and since he did not know the Prophet by face, he kept on looking for the Prophet until the night set in. When it became dark, he lay down to take rest.

[27] ایمان (faith, belief)

After a portion of the night had passed, 'Ali saw Abu Dhar and realized that he was a stranger. So he took Abu Dhar to his home. Abu Dhar followed ‘Ali, but none of them spoke to the other either on the way or at ‘Ali’s home. Next morning, Abu Dhar took his food and water bag and went to Haram. He spent the entire day there, but could not meet the Prophet (saw). The night set in and Abu Dhar lay down to take rest like the previous night. ‘Ali passed by him and said, “Has not the man (i.e. Abu Dhar) found his destination yet so that he could stay there?” ‘Ali then asked Abu Dhar to follow him to his house, but they did not talk about anything.

Same thing happened on the third night also. Finally 'Ali asked Abu Dhar, "Will you tell me what has brought you here?" Abu Dhar replied, "I will tell you if you promise to guide me." 'Ali gave the assurance and said, “Tell me what you want.” Abu Dhar told ‘Ali the purpose for which he had come. 'Ali said, "It is the Truth, and he (i.e. Muhammad) is undoubtedly the Messenger Allah. So when you get up in the morning, follow me. In case I perceive any danger, I will stop pretending that I have the need to urinate. Otherwise, continue following me wherever I go.”

Abu Dhar did exactly what ‘Ali had told him to do until they reached the Prophet (saw). Abu Dhar listened to the Prophet (saw) and accepted Islam right away.

The Greatest Honor

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) narrated, “One day the Prophet (saw) and I left home and came to the door of K’aba. The Prophet (saw) asked me to sit down which I did. He then climbed over my shoulders and asked me to stand up. I stood up, but realizing that I was overstressed, he asked me to sit down. After I sat down, he dismounted from my shoulders. He then sat down and asked me to climb over his shoulders. I climbed over his shoulders after which he stood up. I felt as if I was going up and up and would soon touch the sky. Finally I reached the roof of K’aba where there was placed an idol which was made of either copper or bronze. I started twisting and bending the idol left, right, up and down until I was able to fully grab it. The Prophet then told me to dislodge it. I threw it down and it broke into pieces as if it was a bowl of glass. I came down and we hastened towards our house making sure that no one saw us.” (Hanbal 2012)

This incident highlights the close relationship that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had with the Prophet (saw).

Migration

While the Prophet (saw) continued his mission of inviting Quraish and other Arab tribes to Islam, the animosity and opposition of Quraish continued increasing day by day. The Makkan period of Islam (thirteen years before the Prophet’s migration to Madinah) was marked by many extraordinary events which kept on unfolding one after the other: Quraish’s boycott of Banu Hashim, confinement of Banu Hashim in a gorge, migration of J’afar bin Abi Talib (and Muslims) to Abyssinian, mistreatment of the Prophet (saw) by the people of Taif, *Isra*[28], coming of ‘Umar (ra) and Hamzah (ra) into the fold of Islam, acceptance of Islam by many Makkans and outsiders, death of Abu Talib and Khadijah (ra) who were the two most formidable supporters of the Prophet (saw), ever increasing abuse and mistreatment of Muslims by Quraish, acceptance of Islam by two prominent tribes (Aws and Khazraj) of Madinah, two pledges of ‘Aqbah, spread of Islam in Madinah and migration of Muslims from Makkah to Madinah.

It is neither possible nor necessary to include details of all those events in this biography of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) because they have been described in great detail in other books of history and *seerah* (biographies of Prophet Muhammad) (Nadwi, Muhammad Rasulullah, The Apostle of Mercy 2001, 157-177).

Facing relentless persecution at the hands of Quraish, most of the Muslims had already migrated to Madinah. Those few who were still left in Makkah included the Prophet (saw), Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra), Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and those who had been forcibly detained by Quraish.

Regarding the Prophet (saw), Quraish had become apprehensive that he also might leave for Madinah soon. Thus in order to prevent the Prophet (saw) from making such a move, they gathered in *Darul Nadwah* (meeting place) and agreed to a plan to kill him; each clan was to provide a strong and brave man to execute the killing; and all those men were to inflict a fatal blow to the Prophet (saw) jointly and simultaneously. The rationale behind this strategy was that no clan could be singled out for the killing of the Prophet (saw); Banu Hashim would not dare to fight all the clans and

[28] Ascension of Prophet Muhammad (saw) to heavens.

thus would have no choice except to accept blood-money for the killing of the Prophet (saw). Having agreed to this plan, they dispersed.

Allah informed the Prophet (saw) about their plan. The Prophet (saw) then instructed Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) to lie down on his (i.e. Prophet’s) bed and said to him, “No one will hurt you.”

It was certainly not an easy undertaking. Had there been anyone else in place of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), he would not have been able to close his eyelids even for a moment. But Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had unflinching trust in Allah; he had extreme love for the Prophet (saw); he had absolute faith in the words of the Prophet (saw); and he had unwavering willingness to sacrifice everything for the Prophet (saw). As a result he was ready to do what the Prophet (saw) asked him to do without any hesitation.

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) knew very well that the enemies, upon finding him in place of the Prophet (saw) in the bed, would mince his body into pieces. But it did not worry him. He put himself in the Prophet’s bed and enjoyed a sound sleep.

The enemies gathered outside the Prophet’s house in the appointed night. They were ready to execute the planned attack on the Prophet (saw) as soon as he came out of the house. While they were waiting, the Prophet (saw) came out of the house with a fistful of dirt and passed by them while throwing dirt on their heads and reciting a verse[29] of the Holy Quran. Allah had veiled their eyes and they could not see the Prophet (saw) leaving the house right in front of them.

After some time, a passerby asked them, “Whom are you waiting for?” They said, “Muhammad.” The passerby said, “O hapless people, he is already gone.” They then peeped inside the house. Seeing someone in the bed, they assumed that the Prophet (saw) was still there. But in the morning, when Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) came out of the bed, they realized their mistake and returned with disgust and disappointment.

According to Ibn S’ad al-Baghdadi, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) reported, “When the Prophet (saw) left Makkah with the intention of migrating to Madinah, he told me to stay behind in Makkah so that I could return to the owners their

[29] فَأَغْشَيْنَاهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ meaning “We have covered them up so that they cannot see” [Ya-Seen, 36:9].

goods which they had placed in custody of the Prophet (saw) as *amanah* (trust). People had so much trust in the Prophet (saw) that they used to call him *amin*[30] (trustworthy) and keep their goods in his custody as trust.”

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) further said, “I stayed in Makkah for three days after the Prophet (saw) had left. I did not hide even for a moment and always remained in sight of people. After three days, I set out for Madinah following the same route that the Prophet (saw) had taken. Finally I reached the locality of ‘Amr bin ‘Auf where the Prophet (saw) was staying in the house of Kulthum bin al-Hidam.”

During that journey, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) travelled in nights and hid himself in the daytime. By the time he reached Madinah, his feet were completely parched and blistered. When the Prophet (saw) sent for Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), he was told that Sayyidna ‘Ali was unable to walk. The Prophet (saw) then himself went to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), hugged him and cried after seeing his swollen feet. The Prophet (saw) applied his saliva to Sayyidna ‘Ali’s wounds and passed his hands on his swollen feet. It is said that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) never experienced any pain in his feet thereafter in his lifetime.

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had reached Madinah in the middle of the month of Rabi I and the Prophet (saw) had not yet left Quba[31]for Madinah.

---

[30] امین

[31] Quba is on way from Makkah to Madinah, a few miles before Madinah. While migrating from Makkah to Madinah, the Prophet (saw) had stopped there for about twenty days before proceeding to Madinah.

Chapter 2- ‘Ali in Madinah

The Prophet (saw) migrated from Makkah to Madinah in 622 CE. He lived there until he passed away in 632 CE (11 AH). This chapter covers Sayyidna ‘Ali’s life during those years.

Brotherhood

Ibn S’ad al-Baghdadi writes in his book *al-Tabaqat al-Kubra* that the Prophet (saw) paired Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) with Sahl bin Hunaif (ra) when he instituted brotherhood in Madinah between *Muhajirin* and *Ansar*. Ibn Kathir had the same opinion, but Ibn Ishaq and some other historians held a different opinion. According to them, the Prophet (saw) paired Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) with himself; this opinion is supported by a narration in *Al-Jami Tirmidhi*; Shah Waliyullah Dehlavi (d. 1762) also has preferred this opinion.

Marriage with Sayyidah Fatima

In the second year of *hijrah* (migration from Makkah to Madinah), the Prophet (saw) performed the marriage of his daughter Sayyidah Fatima (ra) to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra). On that occasion, the Prophet (saw) said to Sayyidah Fatima, “I have married you to the best person of my household.” Thereafter he blessed the couple and sprinkled water over them.

Abu ‘Umar has narrated on the authority of ‘Ubaidullah bin Muhammad bin Samak bin J’afar al-Hashmi that the Prophet (saw) married Sayyidah Fatima (ra) to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) after the Battle of Uhad (3 AH) when Sayyidah Fatima (ra) was fifteen years and five and a half months old and Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was twentyone years and five months old. However Shah Waliyullah Dehlavi has rejected this claim arguing that the Battle of Uhad was fought in Shawwal 3 AH and Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had asked Sayyidah Fatima (ra) to clean blood stains from his body; Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) could not have asked

Sayyidah Fatima (ra) to touch his body unless he was already married to her.

The truth is that Sayyidna ‘Ali’s marriage with Sayyidah Fatima (ra) had taken place before the Battle of Uhad. The strongest evidence in support of this claim comes from the fact that Sayyidna Hasan (ra) was born to them in the middle of Sh’aban 3 AH (or in Ramadan 3 AH according to another narration) and the Battle of Uhad had taken place in Shawwal 3 AH.

Ahmad bin Hanbal (780-855 CE, 164-241 AH) has recorded in his book *Musnad Ahmad*[1] a detail account of Sayyidna ‘Ali’s marriage which Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) has himself given. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) said, “I wanted to propose to the Prophet (saw) for getting married to his daughter Fatima, but was hesitant to do so as I had absolutely nothing in my possession at that time. But when I thought of the Prophet’s love and affection, I felt heartened and put the proposal in front of him. Upon that the Prophet asked me if I had anything in my possession and I replied in negative. He then asked me, ‘Where is the armour plate *hatmia* which I had given to you some time back?’ I said, ‘I have it.’ He said, ‘Give that to her.’ I gave that to Fatima as *mahr* (bridal money).”

‘Ata bin al-Saib has related from his father who had heard Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) saying, “The Prophet (saw) cloaked Fatima with a thick sheet of cloth and saw her off. He gave a water bag and a leather pillow stuffed with bark of *idhkhar* (a type of fragrant grass) as dowry.”

Financial Condition of ‘Ali and Fatima

The financial condition of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Sayyidah Fatima (ra) was extremly tight. Hannad relates from ‘Ata that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) told him:

[1] Musnad Ahmad is a collection of *ahadith* by Ahmad bin Hanbal.

> Many days passed when we had nothing in our home and neither did the Prophet (saw) have anything with him. On one of those days, when I came out of the home, I saw a *dinar* lying on the street. I stopped there and remained looking at it thinking whether I should take it or leave it. But my condition was so desperate that I decided to pick it up. Thus I picked it up, took it to one of the merchants who had come from outside with grains on their camels and bought flour from him. I took flour to Fatima and asked her to prepare some bread. She started kneading flour, but she had grown so weak due to acute hunger that her hands would frequently slip during kneading and bang against the kneading bowl. She somehow prepared breads. Thereafter I went to the Prophet (saw) and related the whole incident to him. The Prophet (saw) said, “Eat it. It is a provision from Allah.”

Hannad al-Daynauari al-Sh’abi has narrated a *hadith* according to which Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) said, “When I married Fatima, the daugter of Prophet Muhammad (saw), we had nothing except a sheep-skin which we used as our bedding in the night and as a spread sheet to feed grains to our goats during the day. We had no servant to help us.”

Al-Tabarani has related on the authority of reliable sources the following *hadith* in which Fatima (ra) has narrated as follows:

> One day the Prophet (saw) came to our home and asked, “Where are my children (i.e. Hasan and Husain)?” I said, “When we woke up this morning, we had nothing which we could eat. So their father (i.e. ‘Ali) told me, ‘Let me take them outside. If they stay at home, they will continue crying as you have nothing to feed and pacify them.’ So he went to (that) Jew.” The Prophet (saw) went to that place (which Fatima had indicated) where he saw both the boys playing with a pitcher and a few left-over dates lying nearby. The

> Prophet (saw) then said to ‘Ali, “’Ali, take the boys home as the sun is getting too hot.” ‘Ali replied, “O Messenger of Allah, we do not have even a single grain in our home since this morning. O Messenger of Allah, if you stay a bit, I will collect some dates for Fatima.” Hearing this, the Prophet (saw) sat down while ‘Ali collected some dates. ‘Ali put the dates in a piece of cloth, lifted the boys in his lap and left for home.

The following *hadith* from *Sahih Bukhari* relates an incident in the words of Sayiddna ‘Ali (ra):

> Fatima had become exhausted and exasperated due to the pain of constantly grinding the hand mill. When she got the news that some slaves have been brought to Allah's Messenger, she went to see him, but she could not find him. So she told ‘Aisha of her need and came back. When the Prophet came, ‘Aisha informed him of what Fatima had told her. The Prophet came to our house when we had gone to our bed. On seeing the Prophet, we wanted to get up, but he said, “Stay in your place.” At that time I felt the coolness of the Prophet's feet on my chest. Then he said, “Shall I tell you something which is better than what you have asked for? When you go to your bed, say *Allahu Akbar* (Allah is Great) 34 times, *Alhamdu Lillah* (all praise is due to Allah) 33 times, and *Subhan Allah* (Glorified be Allah) 33 times. This is better for you than what you have asked for." (Bukhari 1986, One-fifth of Booty for the Cause of Allah)

In another version of this incident, the Prophet (saw) is reported to have said, “I will not give you anything while *Ahlul suffah*[2] are suffering from severe hunger. I have nothing to meet their expenses. I will sell these slaves and spend the money on them.”

[2] *Ahlul suffah* comprised of the indigent companions of the Prophet (saw). They used to live on the platform adjacent to the Prophet’s mosque and they did not have any source of income.

Bearing Hardship for the Sake of the Prophet (saw)

Despite having to live a life of severe poverty and hardship, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) never hesitated in doing whatever was within his means to provide comfort to the Prophet (saw) and keep him free for discharging the duty of *d’awah* (inviting people towards Allah and His religion) and *jihad* (struggle in the path of Allah).

Ibn ‘Asakir (1106-1175 CE, 499-571 AH) has narrated the following *hadith* on the authority of ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas (ra):

> One day the Prophet’s household was starving. When Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) came to know about it, he went out in search of some work so that he could earn some money and fulfill the Prophet’s need. So he came upon the grove of a Jew who hired him to irrigate the plants; the Jew agreed to pay Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) one date for every bucket of water that he would pull out of well. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) drew seventeen buckets of water and the Jew gave him the choice of taking any kind of dates that he wanted. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) took seventeen pieces of *Ajwah*[3] dates and presented them to the Prophet (saw). The Prophet (saw) asked Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), “Where did you get these dates from?” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) replied, “O Messenger of Allah, when I came to know that you were starving, I went out in search for some earning so that you might have some food.” The Prophet (saw) said, “Did the love for Allah and His Prophet prompt you to do so?” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) replied in affirmative. The Prophet (saw) then remarked, “There is no one who loves Allah and His Prophet and poverty has not rushed to him as fast as flood water rushes into a low-lying area. One who loves Allah and His Prophet should build a shield to protect himself from adversities.”

[3] *Ajwah* is a special kind of date of Madinah.

Abu Turab – the Affectionate Nickname

The Prophet (saw), out of enormous love that he had for Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), used to call him by the nickname Abu Turab which literally means “full of dirt” or “father of dirt.”

Sahl bin S’ad narates:

> Once Allah's Apostle went to Fatima's house but did not find 'Ali there. So he asked her, "Where is your cousin?" She replied, "There was something between us and he got angry with me and went out. He did not sleep (.e. mid-day nap) in the house." Allah's Apostle asked a person to go and look for ‘Ali. The person came and said, "O Allah's Apostle! He (Ali) is sleeping in the *masjid*." Allah's Apostle went there and found 'Ali lying on the floor. His upper body cover had fallen down to one side and his body was covered with dust. Allah's Apostle started cleaning the dust from ‘Ali’s body saying: "Get up! O Abu Turab. Get up! O Abu Turab. (Bukhari 1986, Book of Prayers)

Batttle of Badr

The Battle of Badr was fought in Ramadhan 2 AH. It was a decisive battle. Not only did it clear the path for Islam and Muslims, but it also changed the course of history (Nadwi, Muhammad Rasulullah, The Apostle of Mercy 2001, 199-213).

When the Prophet (saw) entered the battlefield, he asked Muslims to come forward and face the enemy. ‘Utbah bin Rab’iah, his brother Shaibah bin Rab’iah and son Walid bin ‘Utbah had come forward on behalf of Quraish. From the Muslim side, three persons from *ansar* came forward to face them. The Quraishites asked those three men, “Who are you?” They replied, “We are from *ansar,*” whereupon the Quraishites said, “You are nice people and good match for us, but we want you to bring forth our own brothers and relatives to face us.”

The Prophet (saw) knew better than anyone else the caliber of those Quraishite horsemen; they were extremely brave, highly skilled and fully

tested in fighting and horsemanship. When the Prophet (saw) heard their demand, he said, “Hamzah[4], get up. ‘Ali, get up. ‘Ubaidah[5], get up.”

Hamzah, ‘Ali and ‘Ubaidah were closest to the Prophet (saw) in blood relation and they were dearest to him as well. But in the hour of crisis and danger, he put them before others in harm’s way. When they came forward, the Quraishites remarked, “They are good match for us! They are equal to us in nobility and pedigree!”

‘Ubaidah, who the oldest among them, went after ‘Utbah, Hamzah challenged Shaibah and ‘Ali confronted Walid. Hamzah and ‘Ali killed their counterparts in the very first assault and then came together to finish off “Utbah who had severely injured ‘Ubaidah. Hamzah and ‘Ali carried ‘Ubaidah to the Muslim camp where he succumbed to his injuries. ‘Ubaidah was the first martyr of the Battle of Badr.

Ibn S’ad al-Baghdadi has reported in his book *al-Tabaqat al-Kubra* on the authority of Qatadah (ra) that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was carrying the banner of Muslims in the Battle of Badr.

Ibn ‘Asakir has narrated that the Prophet (saw) had loaned his sword, *Zulfiqar*, to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) in the Battle of Badr and had later gifted it to him.

Battle of Uhad

The Battle of Uhad was fought in Shawwal 3 AH (Nadwi, Muhammad Rasulullah, The Apostle of Mercy 2001, 215-231). Allah helped Muslims and fulfilled His promises. Initially the polytheists of Makkah were uprooted and their womenfolk were running for their lives. But a strategic oversight by the Muslims dramatically changed the course of the battle.

The Prophet (saw) had stationed fifty archers at a strategic location under the command of ‘Abdullah bin Jubair (ra). They were instructed to fight the enemy from that position and not to move from there whether Muslims were winning or losing. But when the enemy started retreating after they were defeated, the archers, assuming that the battle was over, rushed to the

[4] Hamzah was an uncle of the Prophet (saw).
[5] ‘Ubaidah was a cousin of the Prophet (saw). His full name is ‘Ubaidah bin Al-Harith bin Al-Muttalib bin ‘Abd Manaf.

enemy camp and called everyone to join them in collecting spoils of the battle.

‘Abdullah bin Jubair (ra), their leader, reminded the archers of the Prophet’s instruction, but they paid no attention thinking that there did not remain any danger of attack by the enemy. But the enemy was desperately looking for an opportunity. As soon as they found a front that had become unguarded, they mounted a fierce attack from the rear. They also started calling out: “Muhammad has been killed.” Muslims lost the ground, the enemy returned in full force to attack them and victory changed into defeat for them.

In the meantime, the enemy was able to reach the Prophet (saw). A piece of rock had hit him and one of his front teeth was broken. His head was injured and blood was gushing out of his face. His lips were bruised. Muslims did not know where he was. Somehow Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was able to reach him. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) gave him a hand and Talha bin ‘Ubaidullah (ra) helped him stand on his feet. As the Prophet (saw) stood up, Malik bin Sinan (ra) cleaned his face by licking away the blood.

The following *hadith* has been recorded in *Sahih Bukhari*:

> On being asked about the wounds of Allah's Messenger, Sahl bin S’ad said, “By Allah, I know who washed the wounds of Allah's Messenger and who poured water (for washing them), and with what he was treated. I remember everything." Sahl added, "Fatima, the daughter of Allah's Messenger, washed the wounds and 'Ali bin Abi Talib poured water from his sack. When Fatima saw that water aggravated the bleeding, she took a piece of a mat, burnt it, and inserted its ashes into the head wound so that the blood was congealed (and bleeding stopped). The Prophet’s canine tooth got broken on that day, his face got wounded, and his helmet got broken on his head." (Bukhari 1986, Book of Military Expeditions Led by the Prophet)

Ibn Kathir writes:

> Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was present in the Battle of Uhad. After Mus’ab bin ‘Umair got martyred, ‘Ali carried the banner of Muslims. He fought fiercely and killed many

> polytheists. He washed blood off the face of the Prophet (saw) who was injured on the head and had lost two teeth.

Battle of Ditch and Valor of ‘Ali

The Battle of Ditch was fought in Shawwal 5 AH; it is also known as the Battle of *Ahzab* (Nadwi, Muhammad Rasulullah, The Apostle of Mercy 2001, 233-243). It was a very critical and decisive battle. Muslims were faced with difficulties and challenges like of which they had never faced before. But it proved to be a harbinger for the propagation of Islam in future. The following verses of the Holy Quran give a graphical description of this battle:

إِذْ جَآءُوكُم مِّن فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ ٱلْأَبْصَـٰرُ وَبَلَغَتِ ٱلْقُلُوبُ ٱلْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِٱللَّهِ ٱلظُّنُونَا۠ (10) هُنَالِكَ ٱبْتُلِىَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَزُلْزِلُوا۟ زِلْزَالًا شَدِيدًا (11)

> When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes grew wild and the hearts reached to the throats and you were harboring doubts about Allah. The believers were tried and shaken with a mighty shaking. [Al-Ahzab, 33:10-11]

This was the first occasion when the military genius of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) came to full light. On the advice of Salman Farsi, who was from Persia, Muslims had dug trenches around Madinah on the northwest corner – the opening through which enemy could attack and enter Madinah. The strategy of using trenches in warfare was known in Persia, but not in Arabia.

The Makkan army which consisted of 10,000 strong horsemen kept on marching towards Madinah until it reached the trenches. When the horsemen saw the trenches, they were completely shocked and bewildered as they had never seen anything like that before. They then went around and found a narrow opening. They jumped over the trenches with their horses through that opening and entered Madinah.

Among those who were able to enter Madinah was ‘Amr bin ’Abdu Wudd who was considered as good as a thousand horsemen. He challenged

Muslims saying, “Is there anyone who dares to face me?” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) came forward and responded by saying, “O ‘Amr, you had vowed in the name of Allah that if a man of Quraish presented to you two things, you would definitely accept one.” ‘Amr replied, “Yes, I have.” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) then said to him, “I invite you towards Allah, His Prophet and Islam.” ‘Amr replied, “I do not need that.” Sayyidna ‘Ali said, “I then invite you to come and fight me.” ‘Amr said, “O son of my brother, I do not desire to kill you.” Sayyidna ‘Ali replied, “By Allah, I want to kill you.”

‘Amr got flushed with anger. He jumped off his horse, hamstrung it and slapped it on its face. He then flung his sword on Sayyidna ‘Ali and the two got entangled with each other with their swords. They continued attacking each other until Sayyidna ‘Ali got better of ‘Amr and killed him. Ibn Kathir has recorded this incident in his book *Al Bidayah wan Nihayah.*

Another version of this incident records that ‘Amr made a loud call, “Is there anyone who dares to face me?” He continued saying disparagingly, “Where is that Paradise which becomes the home of your martyrs? Why do not you send someone to confront me?” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) got up twice and sought the permission of the Prophet (saw) to challenge ‘Amr, but the Prophet (saw) told him to sit down. ‘Amr repeated his challenge the third time and he did so in a very provoking manner. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) again stood up and said to the Prophet (saw), “O Prophet of Allah, can I go?” The Prophet (saw) replied, “Do you know that he is ‘Amr?” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) replied, “Let it be ‘Amr.” Thereafter the Prophet (saw) gave permission to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) to go ahead and face off ‘Amr.

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) went forward and moved towards ‘Amr upon which ‘Amr said, “O the son of my brother, there are many among your uncles who are older than you. I do not feel like shedding your blood.” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) retorted, “But by God, I do want to shed your blood.” The two started fighting and Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was finally able to overcome ‘Amr and finish him off.

Thereafter a dispute erupted between Quraish and their ally Bani Quraidha. The night became extremely cold and a windstorm came which uprooted the enemy camps and threw away their cooking pots. The battle was over and Quraish became so humiliated that they never dared to fight the Muslims again. The Prophet (saw) said, “Quraish will not be able to wage war against you after this year; you will have the upper hand from now on.”

Treaty of Hudaibiyah

The Treaty of Hudaibiyah was signed in Dhul Qadah 6 AH (Nadwi, Muhammad Rasulullah, The Apostle of Mercy 2001, 261-272). While the Prophet (saw) and Muslims were on way to Makkah to perform *‘umrah*, Quraish stopped them in Hudaibiyah and sent Suhail bin ‘Amr to negotiate the terms of treaty with the Muslims. When the Prophet (saw) saw Suhail coming, he said, “It appears that they are willing to negotiate peace. That is why they have sent this man.”

Suhail said, “Let us put in writing the terms of agreement.” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was called and the Prophet (saw) started dictating to him the terms of agreement. When the Prophet (saw) told Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) to write *Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim*[6] (in the name of Allah most Gracious and most Merciful), Suhail objected to it and said, “What is *Rahman*[7]? I do not know what it is. Write *Be Ismika Allahumma*[8] (in the name of Allah) as we used to write previously.” The Prophet (saw) said to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), “Write that way. There is no harm in doing so.” The Prophet (saw) further dictated, "This is the peace treaty which Muhammad Rasulullah (Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah), has concluded." Suhail said, "By Allah, if we had accepted you as the Allah's Messenger, we would not have prevented you from visiting Baitullah and would not have fought with you. So, write ‘Muhammad bin ‘Abdullah instead of Muhammad Rasulullah.’"

The Prophet (saw) said, "Even though you continue denying it, I am the Messenger of Allah.” The Prophet (saw) then asked Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) to erase what he had written before and write “Muhammad bin ‘Abdullah.” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) said, “By Allah, I cannot erase that.” Then the Prophet (saw) asked Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) to show him where Muhammad Rasulullah was written so that he could himself erase it. (Muslim 1994, Book of Jihad and Expedition)

---

[6] بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

[7] رحمان

[8] باسمك الهم

Expedition of Khaybar

The Battle of Khaybar was fought in Muharram 7 AH (Nadwi, Muhammad Rasulullah, The Apostle of Mercy 2001, 295-306). This is the battle in which the bravery of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and the status that he enjoyed in the eyesight of Allah and His Prophet (saw) came in front of the world. It was destined by Allah that Khaybar which was a strategic stronghold of Jews would fall to Muslims at the hands of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra).

Khaybar was a Jewish colony with a number of strong fortresses. It was in fact the last but most formidable Jewish garrison in the Arabian Peninsula. The Jews of Khaybar, in collusion with the Jews of Madinah and other enemies of Muslims, were planning an attack on Madinah. The Prophet (saw) wanted to eradicate the persistent nuisance and danger that was caused by the Jews of Khaybar once for all.

Khaybar was located about 70 miles north of Madinah. The Prophet (saw) started for Khaybar with an army of 1,400 men and was determined to seize it. Muslims kept on capturing one fort after another until they reached the fort of al-Qamus which appeared to be quite impenetrable. At that time Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was suffering from ophthalmia (an eye disease) due which his eyes had become swollen. The Prophet (saw) said, “Tomorrow the banner will be in the hands of the one whom Allah and His Prophet love and that man will be able to conquer this fort.” This made everyone long for that honor.

Next morning, the Prophet (saw) called Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra). Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) came and the Prophet (saw) applied his saliva to Sayyidna ‘Ali’s both eyes and made *d’ua* (prayer) for him as a result of which the pain of Sayyidna ‘Ali’s eyes instantly disappeared. The Prophet (saw) then gave the banner to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra). Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) asked, “Should I continue fighting them until they become like us?” The Prophet (saw) replied, “Proceed and do not hurry. When you enter their territory, call them towards Islam and inform them of Allah's rights over them. By Allah, even if a single man gets guidance through you, it will be better for you than countless red camels.” (Bukhari 1986, Book of Military Expeditions)

Combat with Marhab

When Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) entered the fort of al-Qamus, Marhab, a renowned Jewish horseman, came from the other side singing couplets in praise of

his own valor and past accomplishments and the two got entangled with each other. During the bout, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) struck a fatal blow to Marhab with his sword, broke his jaw and severed his head from the body. The fall of Marhab ended the battle and Muslims declared victory.

Ibn Hisham (d. 828 CE, 212 AH) has written in *As-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah* (A Biography of the Prophet) that the person who killed Marhab was Muhammad bin Muslimah, but it is not correct. Ibn Jarir al-Tabari has written in *Tarikh al-Tabari* that it was Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) who had killed Marhab. al-Tabari’s version is more reliable as it is supported by a narration in *Sahih Muslim* (Muslim 1994, Book of Jihad and Expedition) also.

Regarding the strength of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), Ibn Abi Shayba has reported in his *Musnad* (anthology) as follows:

> Laith said, “We went to Abu J’afar[9] (also known as al-Baqir) who was a very god-fearing and humble person. He wept and said, ‘Jabir had narrated to me that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), on the day of the Battle of Khaybar, had lifted the door of the fort by himself which enabled Muslims to enter the fort and capture it. That door was so heavy that at least forty persons were needed to lift it.’”

Ibn Kathir, in *Al Bidayah wan Nihayah*, has commented that the report about the lifting of the door in Khaybar by Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) is weak as one of the narrators is unreliable and the chain of narrators is broken. However, this incident has been reported by more than one chain of narrators and is not beyond the realm of possibility; such an incident is not against the creed of *ahlul sunnah*[10] who believe that the occurrence of *karamaat* (unusual phenomena or incidents) at the hands of *auliya-Allah* (persons who are dear and close to Allah) is possible; the basis of this belief is the following verse of the Holy Quran according to which Maryam[11] (*alaihis salaam*) used to get food in an unusual manner:

---

[9] Abu J’afar’s real name was Muhammad bin ‘Ali (also known as Zainul ‘Abedin) bin Husain bin ‘Ali bin Abu Talib. He was born in 56 AH and died in 110 AH.

[10] Followers of the *sunnah* (practices) of the Prophet (saw).

[11] Mary in English literature

كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا ٱلْمِحْرَابَ وَجَدَ عِندَهَا رِزْقًا ۖ قَالَ يَـٰمَرْيَمُ أَنَّىٰ لَكِ هَـٰذَا ۖ قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِندِ ٱللَّهِ ۖ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَرْزُقُ مَن يَشَآءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (37)

> Whenever Zakariyya visited her (i.e. Maryam) at the place of worship, he found food with her. He said, “Maryam, where do you get this from?” She said, “It is from Allah. Surely, Allah gives whom He wills without measure.” [Al-Imran, 3:37]

So why cannot an unusual phenomenon occur at the hands of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) who is among the chiefs of the group of *auliya-Allah*?

Ibn Ishaq relates from ‘Abdullah bin Hasan (who had heard it from certain family members who had in turn heard from Abu Raf’e[12]) that when a Jew hit Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and knocked off his shield, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) caught hold of a door of the fort and started using it as his shield; the door remained in the hands of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) until he conquered the fort.

It is reported in *Al Bidayah wan Nihayah* that Abu Raf’e (ra) said that he along with seven other persons tried to overturn the door, but could not do so. Layth relates from J’afar that as many as forty men were needed to lift that door.

Full Trust in the Words of the Prophet (saw) and Model of Perfect *Iman*

In Ramadan 8 AH, when the Prophet (saw) intended to lead an expedition to Makkah, he instructed his Companions to prepare for it, but wanted to keep his plan secret. He had supplicated to Allah, “O Allah! Keep it concealed from the eyes of Quaraish and keep them uniformed until we suddenly arrive at their door.”

[12] Abu Raf’e was a Companion of the Prophet (saw). He was a slave of the Prophet’s uncle 'Abbas and was set free when 'Abbas converted to Islam.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah (691-751 AH, 1292-1350 CE), in his book *Zad al-Ma’ad*, has given a detailed description of the incident in which Hatib bin Abi Balta'a (ra) had innocently done something which could have disclosed the secret about the Prophet’s plan to attack Makkah and Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was sent by the Prophet (saw) to stop it. This incident has been reported in *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* as well.

Though Hatib (ra) was not from the tribe of Quraish, he had become closely associated with them. He had migrated from Makkah to Madinah and participated in the Battle of Badr, but his wife and children were still in Makkah and there was no influential person in Makkah to protect them in case of need.

So Hatib (ra) thought that if he did a favor to Quraish, they would give protection to his family in case Makkah was attacked by Muslims. So he wrote a letter in which he mentioned that the Prophet (saw) was planning to attack Makkah and gave that letter to a woman who was going to Makkah so that she could deliver it to Quraish; he also gave some money to her for this service. It was undoubtedly a blunder on the part of Hatib (ra). May Allah forgive him for this mistake! The Prophet (saw) has spoken good words about the participants of the Battle of Badr by saying, “It is no surprise that Allah after looking at the sacrifices and sincerity of the participants of the Battle of Badr has forgiven them for whatever wrong they may ever commit.”

The woman had hidden Hatib’s letter in her head braid and was heading towards Makkah. In the meantime, Allah informed the Prophet (saw) through revelation about this incident. The Prophet (saw) called for Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Zubair bin Awwam (ra) and told them, "Start immediately and reach Khakh[13] where you will find a woman who is carrying a letter for Quraish.” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Zubair (ra) rode their horses, galloped to Khakh and found the woman on her camel at the exact location which the Prophet (saw) had mentioned. They asked her, “Do you have any letter?” She said, "No." They made her camel kneel down. They searched the luggage on the camel’s back but did not find the letter. Then Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) said to her, "By Allah, it has never happened that the Prophet said something which was not true. Neither do we lie. By Allah, you will have to give the letter to us. Otherwise, we will strip you naked

[13] Khakh is a place about twelve miles from Madinah on way to Makkah.

and search your person." When she saw that they were serious, she told them to turn their face other way. After they turned their face away, she untied her head braid, took out the letter and handed it over to them. Thereafter they returned back to the Prophet (saw) with the letter.

This incident shows what kind of trust and faith ayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had in the words of the Prophet (saw).

Prophet’s Laudatory Remarks

The expedition of Tabuk[14] took place in Rajab 9 AH. It was a very important event in the life of the Prophet (saw). It yielded results which had far reaching effect in shaping the psyche and attitude of Arabs and Muslims. It played a key role in shaping the course of history. Details of this expedition are covered in all major books of *hadith* and *seerah* (Nadwi, Muhammad Rasulullah, The Apostle of Mercy 2001, 347-364).

The Prophet (saw) appointed Muhammad bin Muslimah al-Ansari (ra) as the governor of Madinah and left behind Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) to look after his household in his absence. Sayyidna 'Ali (ra) expressed his concern that the hypocrites might use this occasion to spread rumors about him. The Prophet (saw) said, “Are you not happy that I trust you in representing me as Musa[15] trusted Haroon[16] though it is true that there will be no prophet after me?” (Bukhari 1986, Military Expeditions led by the Prophet].)

According to another narration which is reported in *Al Bidayah wan Nihayah*, when the Prophet (saw) appointed Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) as his *khalifah* (deputy) for Madinah, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) said,”Are you leaving me behind with children and women?”

Mission to Yemen and Acceptance of Islam by Hamdan Tribe

After the conquest of Makkah (8 AH) and the expedition of Tabuk (9 AH), people of many tribes from all over the Arab Peninsula started

[14] Tabuk is about 330 miles northwest of Madinah.
[15] Moses in the Western literature.
[16] Aaron in the Western literature.

calling upon the Prophet (saw) in large numbers for accepting Islam (Nadwi, Muhammad Rasulullah, The Apostle of Mercy 2001, 35-372). One such deputation came from Yemen and consisted of people from the al-Ash’ari tribe. When they came, they were reciting the following poetic verse:

> Tomorrow we will meet our friends, Muhammad
> and his Companions.

The Prophet (saw) said to his Companions, “People of Yemen have come to you. They are very tender and softhearted people. *Iman* is their lot and wisdom is their treasure.” (Bukhari 1986, Military Expeditions led by the Prophet].)

The Prophet (saw) sent Khalid bin Walid (ra) with a group of Companions to Yemen for the purpose of inviting the people of Yemen to Islam. They remained in Yemen for six months and continued preaching Islam, but they did not make any progress. The Prophet (saw) then sent Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) there. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) read to the people of Yemen the letter which he had brought from the Prophet (saw) and the entire tribe of Hamdan embraced Islam.

When Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) sent a letter to the Prophet (saw) informing that the tribe of Hamdan had accepted Islam, the Prophet (saw), after reading Sayyidna ‘Ali’s letter, thanked Allah by going in prostration. After raising his head from the prostration, the Prophet said twice, “May peace be on the people of Hamdan!”

Representing the Prophet and Humility

Hajj was made obligatory in 9 AH. The Prophet (saw) dispatched a group of Muslims to Makkah to perform *hajj* that year, appointed Sayyidna Abu Bakr Siddique (ra) as their head and instructed him to teach them how to perform *hajj*. The group consisted of 300 persons and they all were from Madinah.

While the group was on its way to Makkah, the Quranic chapter *Al-Tawbah* (Chapter No. 9) was revealed to the Prophet (saw). The Prophet (saw) then called Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and instructed him to set out for Makkah so that he could communicate the opening verses of that chapter to pilgrims on the tenth day of Dhul-Hijjah. The Prophet (saw) further

instructed Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) to convey to people that no *kafir* (infidel) shall enter Paradise, no *mushrik* (polytheist) shall be allowed to perform *hajj* from next year, no naked person shall be allowed to do *tawaaf*, and he (i.e. the Prophet) will remain committed for the rest of his life to any treaty or covenant that he had made with anyone.

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) set out for Makkah on the Prophet’s camel and met Sayyidna Abu Bakr Siddique (ra) on the way. Sayyidna Abu Bakr Siddique (ra) asked Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), “Are you joining us as *amir*[17] (head) or *maamoor*[18] (follower)?” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) replied, “As a *maamoor*.” Thereafter they continued travelling together. People performed the rites of *hajj* under the supervision of Sayyidna Abu Bakr Siddique (ra). When the day of sacrifice (i.e. tenth of Dhul-Hijjah) arrived, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) pronounced what the Prophet (saw) had commanded him to convey to people.

The Farewell *Hajj* and Prophet’s Speech at Ghadir Khum

The Prophet (saw) performed *hajj* in 10 AH; it is known as *hajjatul wid’a* (i.e. Farewell hajj). Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had accompanied the Prophet (saw) in that *hajj*. On the day of sacrifice, the Prophet (saw) slaughtered sixty-three camels with his own hands and then handed over the remaining thirty-seven camels to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) so that he could slaughter them on behalf of the Prophet (saw). Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) slaughtered those animals bringing the total number of camels slaughtered on behalf of the Prophet (saw) to one hundred.

The Prophet (saw) stayed in Mina during the days of *tashreeq* (11th, 12th and 13th of Dhul Hijjah) and then headed towards Makkah. In Makkah, he performed the farewell *tawaaf* and then instructed pilgrims to return to their respective localities. Accordingly, he himself departed for Madinah.

On way to Madinah, when the Prophet (saw) reached Ghadir Khum[19], he delivered a speech in which he elaborated the high status and distinction of

---

[17] امیر
[18] مامور
[19] Khum is a place between Makkah and Madinah, about two miles from the place known as Juhfah. Ghadir means a small stream of water.

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra). The Prophet (saw) said, “Whoever I befriend and support, ‘Ali also befriends and supports him.” Thereafter he supplicated for Sayyidna ‘Ali and said, “O Allah, support those who support him and oppose those who oppose him.”

The reason for rendering such a supplication was that there were some people who had unjustly complained to the Prophet (saw) against Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and had criticized him for some of the decisions which he had made during his mission to Yemen. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was fully justified and upright in making those decisions, but some people had alleged that he had done so out of highhandedness, stinginess and tightfistedness.

Ibn Kathir has reported that the Prophet (saw) left Makkah for Madinah after explaining the rites of *hajj*. On the way, he stopped on 28th Dhul-Hijjah at a place known as Ghadir Khum and delivered a speech while standing under the shade of a tree. In that speech, he addressed several issues, mentioned merits of ‘Ali, acknowledged ‘Ali’s trustworthiness and honesty and highlighted his own relationship with ‘Ali. As a result, those who had developed some bad feelings towards Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) got their hearts cleared.

Death of the Prophet (saw)

As per the decree of Allah, every creation has to taste death and no one is exempted from this rule. The Prophet (saw) also had to face that moment, as Allah has mentioned in the following verse:

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِهِ ٱلرُّسُلُ ۚ أَفَإِيْن مَّاتَ
أَوْ قُتِلَ ٱنقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰٓ أَعْقَـٰبِكُمْ ۚ وَمَن يَنقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقِبَيْهِ فَلَن
يَضُرَّ ٱللَّهَ شَيْـًٔا ۗ وَسَيَجْزِى ٱللَّهُ ٱلشَّـٰكِرِينَ (144)

> Muhammad is but a messenger, there have been messengers before him. So, if he dies or is killed, would you turn back on your heels? Whoever turns back on his heels can never harm Allah in the least. Allah shall soon reward the grateful. [Al-Imran, 3:144]

The mission of the Prophet (saw) had completed. The task of legislation (framing the laws of *Shari’ah*[20]) had finished. Allah had cooled the eyes of His beloved Prophet (saw). The Prophet (saw) had seen with his own eyes that people were entering into the fold of Islam in throngs and there were signs indicating that Islam would reach every corner of the world.

The Prophet (saw) had also witnessed that the Companions whom he had trained and brought up had attained the level where they could be trusted to carry on his mission forward; they were faithfully following his teachings in their own lives and also had the ability to guide others to the same.

Imminent signs had started appearing to indicate that the time for the Prophet (saw) to depart from this world was drawing near. He was eagerly waiting for that moment to arrive and meet his Lord. He had been passionately warning and advising Muslims in his sermons. He had given away whatever worldly possessions he had. It is reported that he had only five or nine gold coins left in his home. He then said to his wife ‘Aisha (ra), “How shall I face my Lord if I have these things in my home? Give them away in charity.” (Hanbal 2012)

When the pain increased, the Prophet (saw) took a bath and tried to get up, but fell unconscious. On regaining consciousness, he asked, “Have people prayed?” On being informed that they had not prayed yet and were still waiting for him in the *masjid* for the *‘isha* (night) prayer, he called for Sayyidna Abu Bakr Siddique (ra) and asked him to lead the prayer.

Sayyidna Abu Bakr Siddique (ra) was a very tenderhearted person. So Sayyidna Abu Bakr Siddique (ra) asked Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) to lead the prayer. Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) said, “You are more qualified than me to lead the prayer.” Finally Sayyidna Abu Bakr Siddique (ra) led the prayer.

Next day, the Prophet (saw) felt better and went to the *masjid* with the help of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Abbas (ra) for the *dhuhr* (afternoon) prayer. Sayyidna Abu Bakr Siddique (ra) was leading people in the prayer at that time. When he saw the Prophet (saw) coming, he wanted to retreat but the Prophet (saw) gestured him not to do so.

The Prophet (saw) then instructed those who were assisting him to help him sit down. So the Prophet (saw) sat down by the side of Sayyidna Abu

[20] *Shari’ah* is the Islamic code of conduct

Bakr Siddique (ra). Sayyidna Abu Bakr Siddique (ra) followed the Prophet (saw) and the people followed Sayyidna Abu Bakr Siddique (ra) in the prayer. The Prophet (saw) prayed sitting while Sayyidna Abu Bakr Siddique (ra) prayed standing. (Bukhari 1986, Call to Prayers)

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) related that the Prophet (saw) bequeathed people to be punctual in performing *salah* (five daily prayers), paying *zakah* (poor-due) and fulfilling the rights of slaves.

‘Aisha (ra) said, “I kept on looking at him (i.e. the Prophet). He raised his gaze towards the sky and said twice, ‘Verily, in the presence of the Most Exalted.’ There was a bowl and a container of water near him. He would dip his fingers in water, rub them on his face and say, ‘*laa ilaha il lallaah*, the pain of death is severe.’ He then straightened the fingers of his left hand and said twice, ‘Verily, in the presence of the Most Exalted.’ Uttering these words, he breathed his last and his hand fell down towards the bowl.”

The news of the Prophet’s death hit the Companions like a bolt of thunder. It was because they had highest degree of love and affection for him. The Prophet (saw) also loved them immensely; he loved them more than a father loves his children. They felt orphaned. They felt as if the Day of Qiyamah (Last Day) had descended upon them. They were shocked and saddened beyond imagination.

The Prophet’s death was most painful to the clan of Banu Hashim and his immediate family, especially to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Sayyidah Fatima (ra). Their grief was exceptional, but they endured it with great patience, fortitude and perseverance which was the hallmark of the family and was perfected under the guidance of the Prophet (saw).

The family members of the Prophet (saw) performed the rites of bathing and burial of his body. No one indulged in excessive bemoaning and bewailing; the Prophet (saw), in his last days, had sternly forbidden people from engaging in acts of bewailing and bemoaning upon the death of someone. The Prophet had said, “May the curse of Allah be on Jews and Christians as they have turned the graves of their prophets into places of prostration. So stay away from such practices.”

The Prophet (saw) breathed his last on Monday, the 12th Rabiul Awwal 11 AH (8th June 632 CE) after the sun has passed the meridian. He was 63 years old at the time of his death. It was the saddest and darkest day for Muslims and a great tragedy for mankind in the same way as the day on

which he was born was the most auspicious and blessed day (Nadwi, Muhammad Rasulullah, The Apostle of Mercy 2001, 385-396).

Chapter 3 - ‘Ali during Abu Bakr’s Caliphate

The Prophet (saw) passed away in 632 CE (11 AH). Thereafter Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) became the caliph and remained in that position until he passed away in 634 CE (13 AH). This chapter covers Sayyidna ‘Ali’s life during the two years of Sayyidna Abu Bakr’s caliphate.

A Critical and Decisive Juncture

The death of the Prophet (saw) was a very critical and decisive event for Islam and Muslims. At that time Islam was like a small island surrounded by a huge sea of ignorance, paganism and polytheism; people were still living an uncivilized nomadic life; Arabs were new to Islam and they were not used to living an orderly and disciplined life; and tyrant rulers were still controlling vast regions of the earth.

All the major religions which had provided guidance to mankind in their golden days had now become lifeless although many nations and large populations were still claiming to follow them. Those religions had fallen victim to internal strife, opposition and conspiracies. They had compromised with their core principles and basic values as a result of which they had become quite inept and irrelevant.

The primary reason for those religions to have met such a fate was that the mantle of carrying on their message had fallen upon those who did not possess same degree of understanding and commitment as their founders. They lacked sincerity, passion and enthusiasm which were required of prophets and their comrades. They did not possess pride and self-esteem which was needed to meet challenges. They had become intoxicated with the love of this world. They had become obsessed with the love of wealth, power and position.

The result was that those religions capitulated to the very philosophies, cults and traditions which they had come to eradicate. It also happened that those religions became tools in the hands of the rulers who, after accepting them, exploited them to fulfill their own ambitions. This had become the

fate of Brahmanism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism soon after their founders had departed from this world. Judaism was no exception to this misfortune and Christianity met the same fate soon after Prophet Isa (*alaihis salaam*) left this world.

Fate of Ancient Religions

We first look at the history of Judaism and Christianity as they are divine religions and the Holy Quran recognizes their followers as *ahlul kitab* (people of the Book).

Judaism

The practice of idol worshipping was prevalent among Israelites[1] from the very beginning and it, along with other innovations, had continued even after the Babylonian Exile[2]. The Jewish Encyclopedia states:

> The thunderings of the Prophets against idolatry show, however, that the cults of other deities were deeply rooted in the heart of the Israelitish people, and they do not appear to have been thoroughly suppressed until after the return from the Babylonian Exile….Through mysticism and magic, many polytheistic ideas and customs again found their way among the people, and the Talmud confirms the fact that idolatrous worship is seductive. (Kopelman Foundation 1906)

Christianity

Christianity was faced with many calamities from the very beginning; religious leaders gave misleading interpretations to the divine scripture; fanatical evangelists tampered with the teachings of Prophet Isa (*alaihis salaam*); and the newly converted Romans brought the remnants of idol worshipping with them. The result was that the simple and straightforward teachings of Prophet Isa (*alaihis salaam*) got buried under the debris of

[1] Israelites are the descendants of Prophet Yakub (*alaihis salaam*) who was also known as Israel. Prophet Yakub is known as Jacob in the Western literature.
[2] The Babylonian Exile lasted from 597 BC to 538 BC.

innovations and altercations; the light of monotheism and worship of One God was eclipsed by the darkness of polytheism and misguidance.

The man who was mainly responsible for all the tinkering and tampering in Christianity was none other than St. Paul (5-65 CE) who had assumed the mantle of interpreting and expounding the teachings of Prophet Isa (*alaihis salaam*) very early on. According to many scholars, he is more responsible than the immediate apostles of Prophet Isa (*alaihis salaam*) for importing the concept of anthropomorphism (attributing human shape to a god) and incarnation (appearance of god in human form) into Christianity from Buddhism. It is St. Paul’s version of Christianity which has remained the official creed of the Orthodox Church for the last nineteen centuries.

Hinduism

The ancient Hinduism (or Brahmanism) had changed its course in the very beginning of its journey. It had lost simplicity and severed connection with the Creator and Master of the universe. It had fully immersed in the worship of idols and it worshipped as many as 330 million idols (O'Malley 1935, 6-7).

Buddhism

Buddhism fared no better than Hinduism. It got mutilated to such an extent that it could hardly preserve anything that resembled the original teachings of Gautama Buddha. It degenerated into a religion of idol worshipping and dogmas and it became difficult to distinguish it from Hinduism except the names of gods and goddesses. The practice of idol worshipping became so common that the word “Buddh” became synonymous with the Persian word “*But*[3]” which means statue (Vaidya 1921, 1:101).

Zoroastrianism

McCasland writes:

> Zoroaster had hardly passed from the scene before a reaction in the nature of a counter-reformation restored the old gods with their ancient cults. They were

[3] بت

> welcomed with enthusiasm by persons who had long found satisfaction in them. The magi[an] priests, who spearheaded the restoration, celebrated their return to the ancient alters. Zoroaster's faith, which had bravely set forth as monotheism, now found itself submerged in a reinstated polytheism. (McCasland 1969)

Succession to the Prophet – Its Requirements and Demands

The death of the Prophet (saw) had presented the new *ummah* (i.e. Muslims) with great many challenges. But it was inevitable and the *ummah* had to face it one day; every soul has to taste death and the decree of Allah does not change, as is mentioned in the following verse of the Holy Quran:

سُنَّةَ ٱللَّهِ فِى ٱلَّذِينَ خَلَوْا۟ مِن قَبْلُ ۖ وَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ ٱللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا

> (Such was) the practice of Allah among those who lived before; no change will you find in the practice of Allah [Al-Ahzab, 33:62].

There was only one way out of that predicament - find a successor who possessed the qualities which would enable him to preserve *deen* (i.e. Islam), protect it from being disfigured and guard the *ummah* against drifting away from the straight path on which the Prophet (saw) had left it. The successor needed to have the following qualities:

1. He had enjoyed full confidence and complete trust of the Prophet (saw) throughout his life after entering into the fold of Islam and the Prophet (saw) had himself vouched for the same. He was delegated by the Prophet (saw) to discharge important and delicate duties. He was appointed by the Prophet (saw) as a substitute for himself (i.e. the Prophet). He was chosen by the Prophet (saw) to be in his company in the most perilous situations where only the most trusted and faithful person could be selected.
2. He had to be a man of such indomitable courage and determination that at a time when the *deen* of Islam would be under assault from all corners and would be faced with the danger of extinction and

even the most devout companions of the Prophet (saw) would be shaken to their bone, he could stand firm like a mountain and demonstrate the mettle and character of the past prophets. He could foresee what others would be unable to fathom and he could preserve *deen* and *'aqeedah* (tenets of faith) in their purest form.

3. He should have correct understanding of Islam. Every fabric of his body and mind should be imbibed with the true spirit of Islam. He should keep in front of him the example of the Prophet (saw) in every condition – in war and peace, in crisis and tranquility, in poverty and plenty, in disunity and harmony, and in every foreseeable situation.
4. He should cherish the honor and sanctity of Islam in the same way as one cherishes the honor and sanctity of his mother, sisters, wives, daughters and daughter-in-laws. His commitment to preservation and protection of Islam should be such that he would be willing to sacrifice anything and everything. No fear or danger would be great enough to deter him from sacrificing his most cherished and prized possession.
5. He should have firm and unwavering commitment to fully implement the teachings of the Prophet (saw) in the absence of the Prophet (saw). He would not be willing to compromise even the least with the teachings of the Prophet (saw) at any cost. He would not care for any condemnation or criticism for being unbending in implementing the wishes of the Prophet (saw).
6. He should have no lust or desire for the worldly life. He should have no craving for name, fame, status or wealth. He should not care about his ease and comfort. He should be so frugal that only the Prophet (saw) could surpass him in austerity and simplicity. He should not have ever dreamed of leaving wealth or an empire behind him for his children as was customary in the nearby kingdoms of Rome and Persia.

Abu Bakr – An Ideal Successor

Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) proved to be an ideal successor to the Prophet (saw). He possessed all the qualities that were needed to assume the mantle of leadership of the *ummah* after the death of the Prophet (saw). His conduct during the lifetime of the Prophet (saw) as well as in his own caliphate was so spotless that there is no room for anyone to raise any question or cast any doubt on his character and personality. The following

is a short description of how Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) fulfilled his obligation as the first caliph of Islam.

1. The Prophet’s Trust in Abu Bakr

To what extent did the Prophet (saw) trust Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra)? The answer to this question lies in the fact that the Prophet (saw) chose none other than Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) to accompany him in the most dangerous journey of his life – migration from Makkah to Madinah.

The Prophet (saw) was migrating from Makkah to Madinah. The enemies were frantically looking for him. They had announced a hefty prize-money for finding and catching the Prophet (saw) which had prompted several horsemen to go after the Prophet (saw). The journey was full of perils and hazards. In such a journey, the Prophet (saw) could have chosen only that person as his companion in whom he had full confidence and that person was willing to risk his own life to safeguard the life and welfare of the Prophet (saw).

The Holy Quran has put the seal of approval on the character and trustworthiness of Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) by mentioning his companionship in the following verse:

ثَانِيَ ٱثۡنَيۡنِ إِذۡ هُمَا فِي ٱلۡغَارِ إِذۡ يَقُولُ لِصَٰحِبِهِۦ لَا تَحۡزَنۡ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ مَعَنَاۖ

> (At that time) they were only two (the Prophet and Abu Bakr) in the cave, and he (i.e. the Prophet) said to his companion (Abu Bakr), "Have no Fear, for Allah is with us” [Al-Tawba, 9:40].

Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) is all by himself in this category and no one else shares this honor and distinction with him.

When it comes to appointing a deputy or substitute to perform certain tasks on one’s behalf, one cannot do so in matters such as performing *salah* (obligatory prayers) or paying *zakah* (obligatory poor-due) as these obligations must be exercised by the person himself. However a deputy or substitute may be appointed to lead a congregational prayer or the rites of

hajj and Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) had the privilege of being appointed by the Prophet (saw) to lead both these services on his behalf.

The Prophet (saw) had appointed Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) to lead the congregational prayer on his behalf – a distinction that is not shared by any other Companion of the Prophet (saw). The following *hadith* gives a detail description of how Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) was appointed by the Prophet (saw) to lead the congregational prayer.

‘Ubaidullah bin ‘Abdullah bin ‘Utbah (Bukhari 1986, Book of Call to Prayers; Muslim 1994, Book of Prayers) narrated:

> I visited 'Aisha (ra) and asked her to tell us about the illness of the Messenger of Allah. She agreed and said: The Messenger of Allah (saw) was seriously ill and he asked whether the people had prayed or not. We said: No, they are waiting for you, Messenger of Allah. The Prophet said: Put some water in the tub for me. We did accordingly and he took a bath. He tried to get up and fainted. After he regained consciousness, he again asked: Have the people prayed yet? We said: No, they are still waiting for you, Messenger of Allah. He again said: Put some water for me in the tub. We did accordingly and he took a bath. When he tried to get up, he fainted again. When he regained consciousness, he again asked whether or not the people had prayed. We said: No, they are still waiting for you, Messenger of Allah. He said: Put some water for me in the tub. We did accordingly and he wanted to get up, but he fainted again. When he regained consciousness, he asked: Have the people prayed? We said: No, they are still waiting for you, Messenger of Allah.
>
> 'Aisha (ra) said: The people were staying in the *masjid* and waiting for the Messenger of Allah to come and lead the *‘isha* prayer. She further said: The Messenger of Allah sent instructions to Abu Bakr to lead the people in prayer. The person whom the Messenger of Allah had sent to Abu Bakr conveyed the message to Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr who was a very tenderhearted person asked ‘Umar to lead the prayer. 'Umar said: No. You are more qualified to do that. Thus Abu Bakr led the prayers during the days the Prophet (saw) was sick.

> After the Messenger of Allah (saw) felt some relief, he went out with the support of two men, one of them was al-'Abbas (ra). It was the time of *dhuhr* (noon prayer). Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) was ready to lead the prayer, but when he saw the Prophet (saw) coming, he felt reluctant to move forward. But the Messenger of Allah (saw) gestured to him to go ahead and not to delay. The Messenger of Allah (saw) then told his two companions to seat him beside Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra). They seated him by the side of Abu Bakr (ra). The Messenger of Allah (saw) then led the prayer, Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) followed the Messenger of Allah (saw) and the people followed Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra); the Messenger of Allah (saw) was sitting while Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) was standing.
>
> After hearing from ‘Aisha (ra), I went to 'Abdullah bin 'Abbas (ra), and said: Should I tell you what I have heard from 'Aisha (ra) about the illness of the Messenger of Allah (saw). ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas (ra) said: Go ahead. I submitted to him what I had heard from 'Aisha (ra). ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas (ra) confirmed what I had said and then asked if ‘Aisha (ra) mentioned the name of the person who had accompanied the Messenger of Allah (saw) with al-‘Abbas (ra). I said: No. Then ‘Abdullah bin al-‘Abbas said: He was ‘Ali.

In another *hadith*, Abu Musa is reported to have narrated the following:

> When the Prophet became sick and his disease became aggravated, he said, "Tell Abu Bakr to lead the prayer." 'Aisha said, "He is a soft-hearted man and would not be able to lead the prayer in your place." The Prophet said again, "Tell Abu Bakr to lead the people in prayer." She repeated the same reply but he said, "Tell Abu Bakr to lead the people in prayer. You are the companions of Yusuf." So the messenger went to Abu Bakr (with that order) and Abu Bakr led the people in prayer in the lifetime of the Prophet. (Bukhari 1986, Book of Call to Prayers)

Hajj was made obligatory in 9 AH. In the same year, the Prophet (saw) sent Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) to Makkah for *hajj* and appointed him as the

amir of the delegation which included about 300 Muslims. Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) taught the pilgrims how to perform the rites of *hajj*.

2. Abu Bakr’s Steadfastness

The degree of tolerance, steadfastness and decisiveness that Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) possessed came to light when Muslims were faced with the most dire and grievous situation. The news of the death of the Prophet (saw) had struck them like a bolt of thunder. There were some who were unwilling to accept that anything like that would ever happen. Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) was one of them. He, despite being a man of extraordinary courage and wisdom, refused to accept that the Prophet (saw) would ever depart from this world. He came to the *masjid* and declared that the Prophet (saw) could not die until all the hypocrites had been wiped away.

That hour of crisis needed a man who could remain firm like a mountain. As soon as Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) heard the news of the death of the Prophet (saw), he came out of his house and rode his horse to the *masjid*. He dismounted the horse at the door of the *masjid* where Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) was addressing people and went straight to the dwelling of ‘Aisha (ra) where the body of the Prophet (saw) was lying wrapped in a sheet of cloth. He knelt down, uncovered the face of the Prophet (saw), kissed the Prophet’s forehead, started sobbing and said, "May my father and mother be sacrificed for you. O Allah's prophet, you have already encountered the death which Allah had destined for you. You will not face another death."

Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) covered the face of the Prophet (saw) and came out of the dwelling of ‘Aisha (ra). Sayyidna 'Umar (ra) was still addressing people. Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) told Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) to stop and listen but Sayyidna 'Umar (ra) continued talking. Seeing that Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) was not stopping, Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) turned to people and started addressing them. When people saw Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) talking, they left Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) and turned to Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra).

After praising the Almighty Allah, Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) said, “Whoever amongst you worshipped Muhammad, then Muhammad is dead, but whoever worshipped Allah, Allah is alive and will never die.”

He then recited the following verse of the Holy Quran:

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِهِ ٱلرُّسُلُ ۚ أَفَإِيْن مَّاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ ٱنقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰٓ أَعْقَـٰبِكُمْ ۚ وَمَن يَنقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقِبَيْهِ فَلَن يَضُرَّ ٱللَّهَ شَيْـًٔا ۗ وَسَيَجْزِى ٱللَّهُ ٱلشَّـٰكِرِينَ (144)

Muhammad is only a Messenger of Allah; there were many messengers who passed away before him. If he died or was slain, will you then turn back on your heels? If anyone did turn back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to Allah; but Allah (on the other hand) will swiftly reward those who (serve Him) with gratitude [Al-Imran, 3:144].

Those who were present at that time said that it seemed as if people did not know about this verse until Abu Bakr recited it. Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) said, “I became speechless when I heard Abu Bakr recite this verse. I then became convinced that the Prophet had indeed passed away.” (Bukhari 1986, Book of Military Expeditions led by the Prophet)

3. Abu Bakr’s Deep Understanding of *Deen*

Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) understood very well that even a slight leniency and compromise in *deen* would prove disastrous. It would open a floodgate of dissensions and the true picture of Islam will be lost forever. He had the foresight which enabled him to see what others could not see.

4. Abu Bakr’s Commitment to Preserve *Deen*

Sayyidna Abu Bakr’s commitment and resolve to preserve Islam in its purest form was absolutely unwavering. After the death of the Prophet (saw), when several Arab tribes questioned the legitimacy of *zakah* as an obligatory deed and refused to pay their dues, Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) asserted, “*Wahi* (revelation) has stopped and *deen* has been completed. How can it be that I am alive and *deen* is being disfigured and mutilated?” This historical statement of Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) carries more weight than volumes of books and many eloquent speeches. (Nadwi, The Four Pillars of Islam 1988)

Those who had refused to pay *zakah* still claimed that they were Muslims and were in compliance with many other injunctions of Islam. That is why many prominent Companions were hesitant in waging war against them, but Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) did not waver in his decision, even for a moment. It is reported that he said, “By Allah, I will fight those who differentiate between *salah* and *zakah* as *zakah* is the compulsory right to

be taken from the property (according to Allah's orders). By Allah, if they refuse to give me even a tying rope[4] which they used to give to Allah's Apostle, I would fight them for withholding it." (Bukhari 1986, Book of Funerals; Bukhari 1986, Book of Holding Fast to Quran and Sunnah)

According to a narration in *Mishkat al-Masabih*, when Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) said to Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra), “O the Caliph of the Prophet, pacify the people and be kind to them,” Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) replied, “You were tough in the days of ignorance. Have you become timid after accepting Islam? *Wahi* has stopped and *deen* has been completed. Is it possible that I am alive and *deen* is dismembered?” (Tabrazi 1990)

Refusal to pay zakah was in fact like digging a hole in the structure of Islam. It would have opened a floodgate of anarchism and rebellion. Had Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) been complacent and lukewarm in dealing with the unruly tribes in the matter of *zakah*, no one could have later succeeded in plugging that gap. People would have started arguing that there was no need to pray in *masjid* and in congregation and that it was sufficient to pray in homes; some would have raised question about the starting and ending times of fasting in the month of Ramadan; some would have raised question about the rites of *hajj* and why they should be performed during certain days of the year. There would have been no end of such objections and arguments.

Had not Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) risen to the occasion and did what was needed to be done, Islam would have splintered into pieces like the beads of a broken necklace. The way he acted was nothing short of divine arrangement. The boldness, courage and determination that he demonstrated bear testimony to the greatness and truthfulness of Islam. It is the result of his foresight and resolve that Islam is still intact today in its original form.

Everyone acknowledges the historical fact that the steps which Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) took to eradicate the wave of apostasy and to save Islam from disintegration reflected the character and courage of the past prophets. This is what was required of the successor to the Prophet (saw). Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) fulfilled that responsibility with great distinction. He deserves thanks from the entire Muslim *ummah* which will remain indebted to him as long as the earth and the skies are intact.

[4] In another narration, a baby goat has been mentioned in place of a tying rope.

5. Abu Bakr’s Commitment to Implement *Deen*

True understanding of the likes and dislikes of the Prophet (saw), insight of the subtleties of *deen* and unwavering commitment to implement the wishes of the Prophet (saw) after the Prophet’s death – these traits became fully evident in Sayyidna Abu Bakr’s personality when he, after the Prophet’s death, insisted upon sending the battalion under the command of Osama bin Zaid (ra) to Syria.

The Prophet (saw) had himself dispatched the battalion shortly before his death and the battalion had only reached Juraf (less than a mile away from Madinah) when the Prophet (saw) breathed his last. It appeared logical to discontinue the expedition as there had arisen an imminent danger of Madinah being attacked by the enemies and renegade tribes. But Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) did not budge and ordered the battalion to continue its march towards Syria against all odds.

Abul ‘Araj reported that Abu Hurairah (ra) said, “I swear by Allah besides whom there is no god! Had not Abu Bakr been the caliph, there would be no more worship of Allah.” Abu Hurairah (ra) repeated this statement two or three times. He further said:

> Abu Bakr ordered the battalion under Osama bin Zaid to continue the expedition saying that he would not stop the army which the Prophet (saw) had himself dispatched and would not fold the banner which the Prophet (saw) had himself unfurled. Thus when Osama’s battalion passed by the tribes which were leaning towards apostasy, they said to each other: “Had not these people been strong enough, they would not have ventured on this expedition. Let them go to Rome and let us see what happens there.” The army of Osama went forth, fought the Romans and defeated them. Seeing the Muslim army returning as victors, the tribes which had become shaky once again became firm in Islam[5]. (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

[5] These were the Bedouins who despite having entered into the fold of Islam had not yet developed true love and spirit of Islam. It was mainly because they lived far from Madinah and did not get enough opportunity to learn and understand Islam; they were still practicing pre-Islamic traditions and had not freed

There were people who had renounced Islam and gone back to *kufr*. Besides them, there were two more kinds of people - 1) Those who had forsaken injunctions such as *salah* (without denouncing Islam completely) and resumed practicing ways of ignorance and 2) Those who had started differentiating between *salah* and *zakah* and stopped paying *zakah*.

Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) decided to fight all of them because he deemed all of them guilty of apostasy. They had either discarded rituals which were obligatory in *deen* or started differentiating between *salah* and *zakah* although both (*salah* and *zakah*) were equally important.

In addition to the above mentioned groups, there was a third group which did not dispute paying *zakah*, but refused to deposit it into the *baitul maal* (public treasury). Chieftains of that group wanted to collect and disburse *zakah* on their own (instead of depositing in the central treasury). Since Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) considered this group as rebel, he, according to the Quranic injunction and consensus of Muslims, deemed it obligatory to wage war against it. Allah has said in the Holy Quran:

فَإِنۢ بَغَتۡ إِحۡدَىٰهُمَا عَلَى ٱلۡأُخۡرَىٰ فَقَٰتِلُواْ ٱلَّتِي تَبۡغِي حَتَّىٰ تَفِيٓءَ إِلَىٰٓ أَمۡرِ ٱللَّهِۚ

> If one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other, then fight until it complies with the command of Allah [Al-Hujraat, 49:9].

Thus Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) fought and subdued all the factions which had rebelled against the core tenets of Islam and were leaning towards apostasy.

He then turned to various imposters who had laid a claim to prophethood, Musailamah being the greatest threat among them. Had he not crushed the imposters, Islam would have probably disappeared from the face of the earth.

---

themselves from their tribal pride, prejudices and rivalries. These are the people about whom the Holy Quran has mentioned: 1) The Bedouins say, ”We believe.” Say (to them), “You have not believed yet. You should rather say, 'We have surrendered (in Islam).' Faith has not yet entered your hearts.” [Al-Hujurat, 49:14]; 2) Do not take friends from among them unless they migrate in the way of Allah. [An-Nisa, 4:89]

He sent out eleven armies under different commanders to beat down the rebels in Sajah, Bani Tamim, and al-Fujat as a result of which the people of Bahrain, Mahra, Oman and Yemen were brought back into the fold of Islam. It is estimated that about fifty thousand infidels, polytheists, rebels and apostates were killed in Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula during the caliphate of Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra).

Ibn kathir has written in *Al Bidayah wan Nihayah*: Abu Bakr brought the renegades back to Islam; he restored Islam to its original form; he smoothed the land of Arabian Peninsula for Islam; and there remained no difference between the people who lived far or near.

Ibn Ishaq writes: When the Prophet (saw) died, apostasy among Arabs raised its ugly head, Judaism and Christianity started asserting their influence and Muslims became like shrunken and withered goats in a rainy cold night; this state of affairs continued until Allah unified them (i.e. Muslims) under the leadership of Abu Bakr.

Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) dispatched Khalid bin Walid (ra) to Iraq who conquered large part of it. He also won the battles of al-Anbar (against Sassanian Persians) and Daumat-ul-jandal (against Arab rebels). There were several other battles as well in which Muslims came out victorious.

Peace was restored in the Arabian Peninsula. Arabs and Islam became stable. Their wave of conquest extended up to Iraq and Syria. Muslims had become ambitious and were carrying the message of Islam to as many nations and countries as possible. At the time Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) left this world, Damascus had already come under the Muslim rule and the Battle of Yarmuk (against Romans) was nearing its end.

The reality is that all the gains that Muslims made during the caliphates of Sayyidna ‘Umar, Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) and Umayyads were the result of what was done during the caliphate of Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra). Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) had in fact laid the foundation for the spread of Islam in the four corners of the world in later years.

6. Abu Bakr’s Frugality

How much did Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) despise the comfort and luxury of this world and how much caution and frugality did he exercise in handling *baitul maal* (public treasury)? The following two incidents are sufficient to answer these questions.

The first incident goes as follows:

> The wife of Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) once expressed to him the desire to have a sweet dish. Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) said that he did not have enough money to buy material for the sweet dish. She then said, “I will save some money from daily expenses so that we will have enough money to buy the required material after a few days.” He said, “That is fine. You have the right to do so.” So she started saving money. When she had saved enough money, she presented it to Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) so that he could buy material from the market. Upon that Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) said, “From the experience we have now come to know that we can meet our expenses with less than what we are getting as stipend from *baitul maal*.” He then returned the savings to *baitul maal* and got his stipend reduced by the amount which his wife had saved every day. He also returned from his personal property the excess amount that he had received from *baitul maal* based upon the new amount of stipend.

The second incident is described as follows:

> When Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) was near the end of his life, he said to his daughter Sayyidah ‘Aisha (ra), “The she-camel of which we used to drink milk, the bowl in which we used to keep curry and the coat that I used to wear are the items which we (i.e. Abu Bakr’s family) used to benefit from when I was the custodian of Muslims. After I die, give these items to ‘Umar.” Thus after Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) died, those items were sent to Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) upon which Sayyidna ‘Umar remarked, “O Abu Bakr, may Allah have mercy on you as you have placed your successors in a very difficult position.”

Consultative Administration and Caliphate of Abu Bakr

Before the coming of Islam, certain families and dynasties used to rule countries for centuries. Kings used to pass reigns of their kingdoms to their sons or designated heirs without any consideration whether they had the ability to rule or not. In other cases, kings were overthrown, deposed or captured by more powerful adversaries. Rulers treated public money as their personal property and spent it as they liked to make their lives as pleasurable as possible. They often displayed ostentatious magnificence and pageantry that defied human imagination. They considered themselves superior to common people in blood and lineage. They believed that they were the rightful owners of their kingdoms and they had been divinely appointed to rule.

On the other hand, masses were generally living a miserable life. They did not have enough food and cloth to keep their backs straight and cover their bodies. They were forced to labor hard under crushing conditions. They were burdened with heavy taxes. In other words, their living condition was not better than that of animals. The history of Rome, Persia and India is full of such atrocities and brutalities.

Monopoly of Priests in Other Religions

The spiritual and religious leadership was also confined to particular families and sects. They tightly controlled religious institutions and the leadership of those institutions was usually transferred from a father to his son. They had the authority to make and amend rules of religion and they often misused that authority to advance their own interests. They were revered as intermediary between god and people. Like the worldly rulers and kings, they also controlled huge empires of wealth and power and chose the life of luxury and comfort. The Holy Quran has accurately portrayed their condition in the following verse:

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ ٱلْأَحْبَارِ وَٱلرُّهْبَانِ
لَيَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَٰلَ ٱلنَّاسِ بِٱلْبَـٰطِلِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ

O you who believe, many of the rabbis and the monks do eat up the wealth of the people by false means and

> prevent (them) from the way of Allah [Al-Tawba, 9:34].

Among Christians, those priests were known as Clergy. The Lebanese Christian scholar Butrus al-Bustani (1819-1883) has defined the term Clergy as follows:

> This name is given by Christians to those who have dedicated themselves for the service of religion. It implies that they are a share or inheritance of god like Levi (the third son of Prophet Yakub) who is mentioned as an inheritance of god in Pentateuch[6]. Among the ancient Egyptians and Hebrews, a rank of people was ordained exclusively for the service of god.
>
> The Christian church from the very beginning had an administrative body (clergymen) which was responsible for making policies. If the church became affluent and prosperous, the clergymen took full advantage of it. They were not merely priests and spiritual leaders, but they were also considered as the source of wisdom and knowledge. They enjoyed many privileges during the Roman Empire. They were exempt from paying taxes. They were exempt from doing any other public service. They were able to exert great influence, both inside and outside government.

Same was true in ancient Persia also. A particular class or caste was entitled for priesthood. The tribe named al-Maghan held the charge of spiritual leadership during the period of Zoroastrianism. The tribe known as Medes was in-charge thereafter. Those tribes were considered as the shadow and representative of god on the earth. Only they could perform religious rites and be appointed as caretakers of the places of worship.

Brahmins had the same status in India. They were the sole custodian of religious and spiritual affairs of Hinduism. They were entitled to a special status in the society which no other caste or group could attain. It was believed that all the wrongs of a Brahmin were already forgiven and he

---

[6] Pentateuch refers to the five books of Bible. Both Jews and Christians credit Prophet Musa with its authorship.

could not be punished even if he committed a murder. The religious rites and functions could only be performed by Brahmins.

Reform that Islam Brought

Islam abolished both the systems – autocratic rule and priesthood. It entrusted the responsibility of selecting the caliph on Muslims and a panel of judicious, sincere and knowledgeable persons. That is why the Prophet (saw) did not designate anyone as his caliph. Had it been obligatory for the Prophet (saw) to designate a caliph, he would have certainly done it in keeping with the guidelines which Allah has prescribed in the following verses of the Holy Quran:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلرَّسُولُ بَلِّغۡ مَآ أُنزِلَ إِلَيۡكَ مِن رَّبِّكَۖ وَإِن لَّمۡ تَفۡعَلۡ فَمَا بَلَّغۡتَ رِسَالَتَهُۥۚ وَٱللَّهُ يَعۡصِمُكَ مِنَ ٱلنَّاسِۗ

> O Messenger, convey all that has been sent down to you from your Lord. If you do not, then you shall not have conveyed His Message. Allah shall protect you from the people [Al-Maedah, 5:67].

سُنَّةَ ٱللَّهِ فِي ٱلَّذِينَ خَلَوۡاْ مِن قَبۡلُۚ وَكَانَ أَمۡرُ ٱللَّهِ قَدَرٗا مَّقۡدُورًا (38) ٱلَّذِينَ يُبَلِّغُونَ رِسَٰلَٰتِ ٱللَّهِ وَيَخۡشَوۡنَهُۥ وَلَا يَخۡشَوۡنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا ٱللَّهَۗ وَكَفَىٰ بِٱللَّهِ حَسِيبٗا (39)

> That has been the practice of Allah with those who have come before and the Command of Allah is decreed. They convey the Message of Allah and fear Him; they fear none but Allah. And Allah is sufficient as a Reckoner. [Al-Ahzab, 33:38-39]

‘Ubaidullah bin 'Abdullah has reported the following *hadith* (commonly known as *Hadith Qirtaas*[7]) on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas:

> When Allah's Apostle was on his deathbed and there were some men in the house, he said, “Come near. I will write for you something after which you will not

[7] حد یث قرطاس (The Arabic word Qirtaas means paper or writing material)

> go astray.” Some of them said, “'Allah's Apostle is seriously ill. You have the Holy Quran. It is sufficient for us.” Those who were present in the house started arguing and disputing among themselves. Some said, “Bring to him (i.e. the Prophet) writing material so that he may write for you something after which you will not go astray.” Others said opposite to that. When the argument became intense, Allah’s Apostle said, "Go away.” (Bukhari 1986, Book of Military Expeditions Led by the Prophet)

The Prophet (saw) remained alive for three days after that incident, but did not again ask for any writing material. During those days, he gave many advices, but did not mention anything about caliphate (succession). Some of the advices that he gave are as follows:

> Offer prayers and be considerate to those who are under you (i.e. slaves and servants).
>
> Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) said, “The Prophet advised us to perform *salah*, pay *zakah* and be nice to slaves.”
>
> May Allah destroy Jews and Christians who have turned graves of their prophets into places of worship!

Sayyidah ‘Aisha (ra) and ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas (ra) reported the following:

> When Allah's Apostle neared his end, he covered his face with his black blanket. But when he became short of breath, he removed it from his face and said, "May the curse of Allah be on Jews and Christians because they took the graves of their prophets as places of worship!" By that, he warned and forbade Muslims from imitating Jews and Christians. (Bukhari 1986, Book of Dress)

Commenting on the *Hadith Qirtas*, ‘Abbas Mahmud ’Aqqad has written the following:

> The allegation that Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) came in the way of Prophet’s dictating a will to appoint Sayyidna ‘Ali as the caliph is quite baseless and unsubstantiated.

> Such an accusation on the character of any reputable person is very irresponsible, much less on a man like Sayyidna ‘Umar. The reality is that the Prophet (saw) did not ask for paper to designate Sayyidna ‘Ali or anyone else as the caliph; it was not at all necessary to write a will for that purpose as a simple gesture or a single word would have been sufficient for it. For example, when the Prophet (saw) made a gesture for Sayyidna Abu Bakr to lead the prayer, everyone understood what the Prophet’s intent was.
>
> The Prophet (saw) remained alive for three days after that incident, but he did not ask for writing material again. There was no one to interfere between the Prophet (saw) and Sayyidna ‘Ali. The Prophet’s daughter Sayyidah Fatima (the wife of Sayyidna ‘Ali) was by the Prophet’s side until he breathed his last. If the Prophet (saw) would have wanted to designate Sayyidna ‘Ali as the caliph, he could have done so without any difficulty.
>
> Apart from the fact that the Prophet’s silence (in the matter of designating his caliph) was not due to any compulsion or pressure, it was his normal practice not to put his family members in positions of authority and prominence and he did not consider it lawful for the heirs of a prophet to benefit from the usual rules of inheritance. When we put these two things (his silence and his view of inheritance) together, we do not find any indication that he had made up his mind to appoint Sayyidna ‘Ali as his caliph and there was anything which could have prevented him from making his wish known if he had one in this regard.

‘Abbas Mahmud ’Aqqad further writes:

> Was it (i.e. inheritance) one of the essential commandments of Allah, it would be strange for the Prophet (who is the final prophet) to have left this

> world without a male descendant[8] and for the Holy Quran (which is the final Book) to have not named a caliph. Was it (i.e. naming of caliph) a will of Allah or a necessary element of *deen*, it would have certainly been implemented like other essentials of *deen* and all efforts to defy it must have failed like any effort that is waged against the laws of nature.
>
> There is neither an explicit *nas*[9] (command) nor a circumstantial evidence to support the assertion that caliphate is a matter of inheritance and that it must remain confined within the clan of Banu Hashim.

Bay’ah[10] (Oath of Allegiance) to Abu Bakr

Muslims of Madinah included both the *Ansar* and *Muhajirin*; they were fully capable of making a decision (about caliphate) and their decision would have been acceptable to Muslims of all other regions. But after the death of the Prophet (saw), they were standing at a crossroad and they had basically two options.

They could have unanimously agreed upon a person who was respected for his impeccable character and integrity; who was kept in high esteem by the Prophet (saw); whose truthfulness and trustworthiness was vouched by the Prophet (saw) himself; and who was entrusted by the Prophet (saw) with delicate responsibilities at crucial moments. They could have united behind such a person and continued the task of conveying the message of Allah to entire mankind without any interruption.

Or, they could have become engaged in bickering, fighting, opposing and blaming each other. The obvious result was that they would splinter into

---

[8] One of the sons of the Prophet (saw) was Qasim after whom the Prophet (saw) was called abul-Qasim. Qasim had died as an infant. ‘Abdullah, Taiyab and Tahir were born after him; they all were born to Khadija. Ibn Qayyim holds the view that Taiyab and Tahir are the aliases of ‘Abdullah. Ibrahim was born to Maria, the Copt, but he also had died in infancy. Thus if Allah had willed to keep the seat of caliphate within the progeny of the Prophet (saw), it was not difficult for Him to keep one of the sons of the Prophet (saw) alive.

[9] نص – word.

[10] بیعت – oath of allegiance.

many factions and Islam would meet the same fate as that of other religions of the past.

Actually situation was potentially more explosive than it appeared on the surface. Madinah was the home of Aus and Khazraj, the two major branches of the tribe of Qahtan. They were the ones who had welcomed the Prophet (saw) to Madinah; given shelter to those who had migrated from Makkah; treated emigrants like their own kith and kin; and demonstrated unprecedented level of sacrifice, generosity and bigheartedness towards the Prophet (saw) and emigrants. Their love for emigrants was so exemplary that it got mentioned by Allah in the following verse of the Holy Quran:

وَٱلَّذِينَ تَبَوَّءُو ٱلدَّارَ وَٱلۡإِيمَـٰنَ مِن قَبۡلِهِمۡ يُحِبُّونَ مَنۡ هَاجَرَ إِلَيۡهِمۡ

> And those (i.e. Ansar) who had been living there (i.e. Madinah) from before and had adopted the Faith, love those who emigrated to them [Al-Hashr, 59:9].

The people of Aus and Khazraj had been living in Madinah for centuries while emigrants from Makkah had been there only for a few years. Thus Ansar, by being the real residents of Madinah, could not be blamed if they thought that they were more entitled than the emigrants to succeed the Prophet (saw).

Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) was quick to grasp the complexity, sensitivity and gravity of the situation. He fully understood the challenges which the death of the Prophet (saw) had brought to Muslims. Allah had blessed him with exceptional astuteness and foresight which had come to light many times before. He felt that even the slightest delay in resolving the issue of caliphate would prove disastrous. He believed that any failure on the part of those who were responsible for maintaining unity and consensus among Muslims would cause irreparable damage and Muslims would not be able to recover from it.

Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) was aware that there were some among Ansar who wanted one of their own to be appointed as the caliph. He also knew that the two Ansar tribes, Aus and Khazraj, had been at loggerheads for a very

long time and their rivalry could be easily reignited[11]. But he also knew that people of the Arabian Peninsula could accept only a Quraish as their caliph; past services and leadership skills have earned Quraish the reputation of being the most capable people in the Arabian Peninsula.

The Prophet (saw) had just passed away and his burial had yet to take place. Sayyidna 'Umar (ra) wanted the issue of caliphate to be resolved without any delay so that Muslims could remain united, an atmosphere of solidarity could prevail and the rites of the Prophet's burial could be performed by the new caliph. He believed that any delay in selecting the new caliph would give ample opportunity to Satan to sow the seeds of disunity and confusion among Muslims.

Ansar had already gathered in Saqifa bin Sa'idah and they were close to declaring *bay'ah* to one the leaders of Aus or Khazraj. Had it happened so, *Muhajirin* would have been completely left out of any role in the leadership and the unity of Muslims would have suffered a fatal blow.

Sayyidna 'Umar (ra) sensed the urgency of the matter, took Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) with him and rushed to Saqifa bin Sa'idah. Upon Sayyidna 'Umar's persuasion, all the *Ansar* and *Muhajirin* who were present there swore allegiance to Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) and the imminent danger that Islam was facing was averted.

The next day, other people swore allegiance to Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) in Masjid Nabwi. On that occasion, Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) addressed people as follows:

> O People! I have been appointed as your caretaker. I am not the best among you. If I do something right, support me. If I do something wrong, correct me. To speak truth is a trust. To lie is an act of treason. To me, those who are weak among you are strong and

[11] This danger was real and Abu Bakr had alluded to it in his statement: If the responsibility of caliphate is entrusted to Aus, Khazraj will object to it and if someone from Khazraj is made the caliph, Aus will object to it. Only a person from Quraish will be acceptable as the caliph by all the Arab tribes. Let us (i.e. Quraish) take the reins of leadership in our hands and you (i.e. Ansar) become our advisors. Do not hesitate in advising us and we will not make any major decision without your advice.

> powerful to me until they get their right. Those who are strong and powerful among you are weak to me until I take what they owe to others and give it to the rightful owners.
>
> It is a fact that whenever a nation shirks the responsibility of striving in the path of Allah, it is disgraced and humiliated. Whenever a community becomes obsessed with lewdness and profanity, it is inflicted with pain and hardship. As long as I am obedient to Allah, remain obedient to me. When I become disobedient to the orders of Allah and His Prophet (saw), obeying me is no more obligatory on you. *Bismillah* (with the name of Allah), let us rise up and pray *salah*. May Allah shower His mercy and blessings on you! (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

The ascension of Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) to the seat of caliphate was neither accidental nor the result of a collusion or conspiracy. It was in fact the decree of Almighty Allah and a display of His magnanimity. Allah had already decreed that this *deen* (i.e. Islam) would prevail and Muslims would remain united under the banner of Kalimah[12]. It was also in accordance with the age-old tradition of Arabs who used to decide matters of importance through unfettered discussions and consultations, appoint as their leader someone who was elderly, experienced, known for his sincerity and foresight and capable of leading them in both war and peace; Arabs had been following this tradition for generations[13].

Justice Syed Ameer ‘Ali[14], an eminent scholar, writes:

---

[12] It is He Who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of Truth, that he may proclaim it over all religion, even though the pagans may detest (it) [Quran, As-Saff, 61:9].

[13] ‘Abbas Mahmud ’Aqqad writes: At the time of the Prophet’s death, Sayyidna ‘Ali was two or three plus thirty years old. Thus it was not plausible for the community (which gave so much importance to ripe age and maturity in selecting its leader) to select a young person as the caliph ('Aqqad 1957).

[14] Syed Ameer ‘Ali (1849-1928) belonged to a Shi’ite family whose forefathers came to India from Iran with Nadir Shah Khorasani. He was an eminent legal scholar. He authored a number of influential books on Mohammedan Law. He served as the chief justice of the Bengal High Court in 1904. He was the first

> Among the Arabs, the chieftaincy of a tribe is not hereditary, but elective; the principle of universal suffrage is recognised in its extremest form, and all the members of a tribe have a voice in the election of their chief. The election is made on the basis of seniority among the surviving male members of the deceased chieftain's family. This old tribal custom was followed in the choice of a successor to the Prophet, for the urgency of the times admitted of no delay. Abu Bakr, who by virtue of his age and the position he had held at Mecca occupied a high place in the estimation of the Arabs, was hastily elected to the office of Khalifa (Caliph) or vicegerent of the Prophet. He was recognized as a man of wisdom and moderation, and his election was accepted with their usual devotion to the faith by 'Ali and chief members of Mohammad's family. (S. A. Ali, A Short History of the Saracenes 1900, 21)

Due to the selection of Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) as the caliph, Muslims and Arabs were protected from the custom of hereditary transfer of power in which blood relation and lineage was given more importance than anything else. Had someone from Banu Hashim (the clan of the Prophet) been elected as the first caliph, for which they were fully qualified, it would have established the authority of Banu Hashim in both the spiritual and political spheres and thus would have given rise to a hierarchical system of priest-hood very similar to the Christian clergy. Had it happened so, Islam also would have suffered from the unfortunate experiences of Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Brahmanism; both the religious and political leadership would have come under the control of Banu Hashim; later generations would have considered Banu Hashim inherently superior to common people; Banu Hashim would have accumulated a lot of wealth from its followers and lived a luxurious life.

But this would have been quite contrary to the spirit of the teachings of the Prophet (saw) who had prohibited Banu Hashim from accepting *sadaqah*[15] (charity) and living off the earnings of others. According to a *hadith*, Abu

---

Indian to be appointed to the British Privy Council. His two books *Spirit of Islam* and *A Short History of the Saracenes* became very popular.

[15] صدقه

Huraira (ra) narrated: When Hasan bin 'Ali took a date from the dates of *sadaqah* and put it in his mouth, the Prophet (saw) said to him, "*kakh*[16], *kakh*," took the date out of his mouth and said, “Don't you know that we do not eat *sadaqah*.” (Bukhari 1986, Book of Jihad)

In another long *hadith* which is narrated by Rabi'a bin Harith bin 'Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet (saw) is reported to have said: Verily these *sadaqat*[17] are impurities of people and they are not permissible for Muhammad or the family of Muhammad. (Muslim 1994, Book of Zakat)

Allah has protected the Prophet’s household and the progeny of Banu Hashim from being included in the wrath which the following verse of the Holy Quran has mentioned:

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ ٱلْأَحْبَارِ وَٱلرُّهْبَانِ
لَيَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَٰلَ ٱلنَّاسِ بِٱلْبَـٰطِلِ

> O you who believe, many of the rabbis and monks do eat up the wealth of people by false means [Al-Tawba, 9:34]

Contrary to that, the Prophet (saw) always put his close relatives ahead of others in hours of difficulty and danger. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) wrote the following in one of his letters to Mu’awiya bin Abi Sufyan (ra):

> When the battle was at its peak and people were about to lose heart, the Prophet (saw) would ask members of his family to go ahead and save others from enemy’s swords and lances. That was the reason why ‘Ubaidah bin Harith (Prophet’s cousin) was killed in Badr, Hamzah (Prophet’s uncle) in Uhad and J’afar (Prophet’s cousin) in Mu’tah.

Had both the political and spiritual leaderships come to the lot of Banu Hashim, these branches of governance would have remained confined within that clan forever, as was candidly observed by some people of Quraish: Had Banu Hashim been made your caretaker, leadership would

[16] It means “No”
[17] صدقات – it is the plural of صدقه (charity)

have become their exclusive preserve and it could have never branched into any other clan of Quraish ('Aqqad 1957).

Those who have studied history of reformist and revivalist movements know very well that there were many endeavors which had started for purely noble and religious reasons, but ended up as a vehicle for the advancement of interests of a particular family, group or dynasty. That is why those who have foresight and fear of Allah are often fearful about the final outcome of such endeavors.

It will be appropriate to recall here the conversation that had taken place between Hercules (Caesar of Rome) and Abu Sufyan bin Harb after the Prophet (saw) had sent a letter to Hercules inviting him to Islam. It shows how Hercules reacted to the Prophet’s letter and what he wanted to know about the Prophet (saw) in order to form an opinion about him and his mission.

Hercules asked Abu Sufyan, “Was there anyone amongst the Prophet’s ancestors a king?” Abu Sufyan replied, “No.” Hercules then said, “When I questioned you whether anyone amongst his ancestors was a king, your reply was in negative. If your answer had been in affirmative, I would have thought that this man was trying to regain that kingdom.” (Bukhari 1986, Book of Revelation)

Hercules’s observation was based upon historical facts. If after the death of the Prophet (saw), had a hereditary system of governance come into existence and had the mantle of leadership gone to a close relative of the Prophet (saw), history might have given the verdict that the main objective of the Prophet’s effort was to secure kingdom, power, glory and worldly benefit for his descendants.

It was the wisdom of Allah that He had decreed that the leadership of Muslims after the death of the Prophet (saw) would not go to a close relative of the Prophet saw) or to a person of the clan of Banu Hashim[18]. Instead Allah chose Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) of the clan of Bani Taym as the first caliph to succeed the Prophet (saw), Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) of the clan of Bani ‘Adi as the second caliph, Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) of Banu

[18] Hasan bin ‘Ali (ra) understood this fine point very well when he remarked, “By Allah, I do not think Allah will give both the prophethood and caliphate to our family.’

Umayyah as the third caliph and then Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) of the clan of Banu Hashim as the fourth caliph when there was no one left better than him (i.e. ‘Ali) among the Companions of the Prophet (saw) to shoulder the responsibility of caliphate.

By the time Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was appointed as the caliph, the chances of any misunderstanding had already disappeared and there was no room left for anyone to object that the leadership had remained confined to the Prophet’s clan or family. It was all according to the will of Almighty Allah, as has been mentioned in the Holy Quran:

وَكَانَ أَمْرُ ٱللَّهِ قَدَرًا مَّقْدُورًا

> And the commandment of Allah is certain destiny [Al-Ahzab, 33:38\f”q”]

The First Test for Abu Bakr and His Steadfastness

All the biographers of the Prophet (saw) and all the scholars of *hadith* agree that the Prophet (saw) had said: We, the group of prophets, do not bequeath anything to anyone; whatever we leave behind is *sadaqah*.

The following *hadith* has been recorded in *Musnad Ahmad* on the authority of Abu Hurairah:

> My descendants will not distribute *dinar* (i.e. gold) and *dirham* (i.e. silver) among themselves. Whatever I have left behind for the maintenance of my wives and their caretakers is *sadaqah* (Hanbal 2012).

Similar *ahadith* have been recorded in *Sahih Bakhari*, *Sahih Muslim* and *Sunan Abu Dawud*. One from *Sahih Bakhari* is as follows:

> 'Urwah reported that 'Aisha said: When Allah's Apostle died, his wives intended to send 'Uthman to Abu Bakr to ask him for their share of inheritance. I then said to them, “Did not Allah's Apostle say, 'Our (Apostles') property is not to be inherited and whatever we leave is to be spent in charity’” (Bukhari 1986, Book of Wills and Testaments)

Such a declaration (regarding inheritance) was quite fitting for the esteemed status of the Prophet (saw) and it was fully in line with how he practiced in his day-to-day life. Whenever there was an occasion which was full of danger and required sacrifice, he put members of his own family or Banu Hashim in front of others. But on occasions of ease, comfort and benefit, he kept them behind.

In the Battle of Badr, he sent Hamzah, ‘Ali and ‘Ubaidah to face the most ferocious fighters of Quraish. He made it illegal for the members of his family and clan (Banu Hashim) to receive any portion of *zakah* which is the largest source of income for (poor) Muslims. In the last *hajj*, he made the following declaration:

> Everything pertaining to the days of ignorance is under my feet and is completely abolished. Abolished are also the blood-revenges of the days of ignorance. The first claim on blood-revenge which I abolish is that of the son of Rabi'a bin al-Harith (his nephew) who was nursed among the tribe of Sa'd and killed by Hudhail. And the usury of the pre-Islamic period is abolished and the first usury I abolish is that of 'Abbas bin 'Abd al-Muttalib (his uncle). (Muslim 1994, Book of Hajj)

Soon after Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) assumed the responsibility of caliphate, the issue of inheritance appeared as a great challenge to him. It was a very delicate issue, was fully charged with emotions and had enormous political implications. He had to deal with it in a balanced manner; he had to enforce the laws of *shari’ah* without becoming insensitive to the feelings of affected parties.

The following *hadith* has been recorded in *Sahih Bukhari* on the authority of ‘Aisha (ra):

> Fatima and 'Abbas called upon Abu Bakr and claimed their inheritance from the Prophet's land of Fadak[19] and his share of booty from Khaybar. Abu Bakr said to

[19] Fadak was a garden oasis in Khaybar, a tract of land in Northern Arabia. Situated approximately thirty miles from Madinah, it was known for its water wells and dates. When Muslims defeated the people of Khaybar, it was given to the Prophet (saw) as a part of the booty.

> them, "I heard the Prophet saying, 'Our (i.e. prophets’) property is not inherited, and whatever we leave is to be given in charity.’ But the family of Muhammad can take their sustenance from this property.” (Bukhari 1986, Book of Military Expedition Led by the Prophet)

In another narration, it is reported that Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) said, “I have heard the Prophet (saw) saying that prophets do not leave any inheritance. However I will take care of the expenses of those whom the Prophet (saw) used to take care of.” (Hanbal 2012)

The following is an excerpt from a long *hadith* which has been recorded in *Sahih Bukhari* on the authority of ‘Aisha (ra):

> Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, sent someone to Abu Bakr (when he was a caliph) asking for her inheritance of what Allah's Apostle had left of the property bestowed on him by Allah from the *Fai* (i.e. booty gained without fighting) in Madinah and Fadak and what remained of the *khumus*[20] of the Khaybar booty[21]. On that, Abu Bakr said, "Allah's Apostle said, ‘Our property is not inherited. Whatever we leave is *sadaqah*, but the family of (the Prophet) Muhammad can fulfill its need from this property.' By Allah, I cannot touch the estate which the Allah's Apostle has left as *sadaqah*. I will leave it as it was during the lifetime of Allah's Apostle and I will do exactly what he did." (Bukhari 1986, Book of Military Expedition Led by the Prophet)

Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) said, “By Allah, I cannot forsake anything that the Prophet used to do. I will continue doing whatever the Prophet was doing.”

---

[20] خمس means one-fifth; it refers to the distribution of booty as stipulated in the Quranic verse [Al-Anfal, 8:41].

[21] Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra), during his caliphate, used to regularly pay to the household of the Prophet (saw) their share of income from the Prophet’s properties in Madinah, Fadak and Khaybar, but did not make them outright owners of those properties. The renowned scholar Izz al-Din ibn Abi al-Hadid, author of *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, ha narrated from Mohammad Baqir that no injustice was done to his forefathers in this regard; the same is reported from Zaid Shaheed also.

Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) remained firm in what he believed and deemed right and did not digress from his position. On the other hand, Sayyidah Fatima (ra) kept on pressing her demand; maybe, it was because she was unaware of what Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) knew; or she thought that it was within the authority of the Prophet’s caliph to fulfill her demand[22]. Both Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) and Sayyidah Fatima (ra) were justified in their own right; each had his or her own reasoning and both were right.

It is reported in *Musnad Ahmad* that that Sayyidah Fatima (ra) said to Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra), “What you have heard from the Messenger of Allah, you know it better.” (Hanbal 2012)

Sayyidah Fatima (ra) remained alive for six months after the death of the Prophet (saw). She continued to have the grievance against Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) and there was no communication between the two till the end. It is not uncommon to have such disputes and misgivings among relatives and family members; as humans, we are prone to have disagreements. It is also true that we sometimes become excessively emotional and overzealous about what we believe to be true.

However, the dispute between Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) and Sayyidah Fatima (ra) did not go out of bound and never developed into animosity or disrespect. They always maintained decency, graciousness and modesty because these traits were engrained in their character.

There is a narration reported by ‘Amir as follows:

> When the sickness of Fatima became severe, Abu Bakr came to her house and asked ‘Ali for permission to visit her. ‘Ali said to Fatima, “Abu Bakr is waiting outside and he wants permission to come inside and visit you. If you wish, you can give permission to him.” Fatima said, “Is that alright with you?” ‘Ali replied in affirmative and then gave permission to Abu Bakr. Abu

[22] The other reason of difference of opinion between Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) and Sayyidah Fatima (ra) was that Sayyidah Fatima (ra) thought that “Prophets do not leave any inheritance” applied only to movable assets such as *dinar* and *dirham* and not to immovable assets such as land. But Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) held the view that it applied to both the movable and immovable assets.

> Bakr came inside the house, apologized to Fatima and talked to her. This made Fatima happy.

We conclude this discussion with the comments of ‘Abbas Mahmud ‘Aqqad:

> It makes no sense to doubt Sayyidna Abu Bakr’s loyalty to the Messenger of Allah because of his refusal to give inheritance to the Prophet’s daughter Sayyidah Fatima. If he deprived Sayyidah Fatima (ra), he did the same to his own daughter Sayyidah ‘Aisha (ra); he had done so simply because he believed that prophets do not leave behind any inheritance. Sayyidna Abu Bakr’s intent was not to deprive the Prophet’s family which included his own daughter (i.e. Sayyidah ‘Aisha), but his intent was to uphold the laws of *shari’ah*; protecting and safeguarding *deen* was more important than providing financial benefit to the Prophet’s family.
>
> Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) did not have any choice other than what he did. The only thing he knew was that prophets do not have inheritors as the Prophet (saw) had himself stated. When he (i.e. Sayyidna Abu Bakr) was about to die, he instructed Sayyidah ‘Aisha (ra) to forego in favor of Muslims everything that he had given to her although it was permissible for her to keep them as gift and inheritance. ('Aqqad 1957)

Sayyidah Fatima

I cannot proceed any further without paying tribute to Sayyidah Fatima (ra), the beloved daughter of the Prophet (saw).

She is Fatima Zahra, the youngest and most beloved child of the Prophet (saw). She was born before the Prophet (saw) proclaimed prophethood. According to a narration, she was born a year and few days before the Prophet (saw) proclaimed prophethood. She was married to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) in the beginning of Muharram 2 AH.

According to Sheikh Abu J’afar Muhammad ibn Hasan Tusi (996-1067 CE, 385-458 AH), a renowned Shi’ah scholar, Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) was heavily involved in preparing for the wedding of Sayyidah Fatima (ra) and in purchasing items for her dowry.

Similarly, Sayyidah ‘Aisha (ra) and Sayyidah Umme Salmah (ra) had actively participated in getting the dwelling for Sayyidah Fatima (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) ready before their marriage.

Since Sayyidah Fatima (ra) was the Prophet’s only child who had any offspring, the Prophet’s progeny has continued only through her. When she was married to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), she was fifteen years and five and half months old. According to al-Tabarani, Sayyidah ‘Aisha (ra) used to say, “I did not find anyone better than her (i.e. Fatima) except her father (i.e. the Prophet).”

Abu ‘Amr said, “Zainab was the oldest among the daughters of the Prophet (saw). Ruqaiya was the next, then Umm Kulthum and the youngest was Fatima.”

‘Abdur Rahman bin Abi N’aim has narrated on the authority of Abu Sa’id al-Khudri: Fatima is the leader of the women of Paradise.

Al-Miswar bin Makhrama has narrated: I heard Allah's Apostle (saw) while he was on the pulpit saying, "Fatima is a part of my body. What hurts her hurts me as well. What angers her angers me as well.” (Bukhari 1986, Book of Nikah; Muslim 1994, Merits of the Comanions of the Prophet)

Sayyidah ‘Aisha (ra) narrated: Once Fatima came walking and her stride looked exactly similar to that of the Prophet (saw). (Bukhari 1986, Merits of the Prophet and His Companions)

While Sayyidah Fatima (ra) was alive, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) did not have any other wife.

‘Uqbah bin Yaraym relates from Abu Th’albah al-Khashni: It was the practice of the Prophet (saw) that whenever he returned from a journey or expedition, he would go to *masjid*, pray two *rak’ah* (units) there and then visit Sayyidah Fatima (ra); thereafter he used to go to see his wives.

‘Aisha bint Talha narrated on the authority of Sayyidah ‘Aisha (wife of the Prophet): I did not find anyone bearing greater resemblance to the Prophet (saw) in speech and appearance than Fatima.

Sayyidah Fatima (ra) was extremely mindful of the likes and dislikes of the Prophet (saw). She considered nothing more precious than the Prophet’s pleasure. Her love for the Prophet (saw) was deeper than the natural love that children usually have for their parents. Here are a few examples to illustrate her love for the Prophet (saw).

1. ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar (ra) has narrated the following:

   Whenever the Prophet (saw) went out on a journey, the very last thing that he did before leaving was to see Fatima. Similarly, the very first thing that he did after returning from a journey was to see Fatima.

   When the Prophet (saw) returned from the expedition of Tabuk, Fatima had bought for herself a head-scarf which she had colored in saffron, hung a curtain on her door and spread a mat in her house. When the Prophet (saw) went to Fatima’s house and saw those articles, he returned to the masjid and sat there. Fatima then sent for Bilal and asked him to find out why the Prophet (saw) had returned from her door. Bilal came to the Prophet (saw) and presented Fatima’s question to him. The Prophet (saw) said that it was because he had seen such and such things there. Bilal communicated the Prophet’s answer to Fatima. Fatima immediately removed the curtain, changed her dress and put on the old and patched clothing. Bilal went back to the Prophet (saw) and the Prophet (saw) came back to the house of Fatima. The Prophet (saw) said, “Live like this. May my parents be sacrificed for you!”

2. ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar (ra) has narrated the following:

   Once the Prophet (saw) went to the house of Fatima but returned without going inside. Later when 'Ali came, Fatima described the incident to him. 'Ali went to the Prophet and asked him about it. The Prophet said, "I saw an ornamented curtain on her door. What do these things have to do with us (i.e. our family)?” 'Ali went to Fatima and conveyed the Prophet’s reply to her. Fatima said, "I am ready to dispense with it in the way he suggests." The Prophet (saw) instructed her to send it to such-and-such needy persons. (Bukhari 1986, Book of Gifts)

3. Thawban has narrated the following:

> When the Apostle of Allah (saw) went on a journey, the last member of his family he used to see was Fatima. Similarly, upon his return from a journey, the first person whom he used to see was Fatima. Once when he returned from an expedition, he saw that a curtain was hanging at Fatima’s door and Hasan and Husain were wearing silver bracelets. Seeing that, he stopped and did not enter Fatima’s house. Fatima instantly understood the reason why the Prophet (saw) had not entered the house. So she immediately tore down the curtain and took the bracelets off the wrists of Hasan and Husain. Hasan and Husain started crying and went on to the Prophet (saw) with the bracelets. The Prophet took the bracelets from them and told me, “Thawban, take these bracelets to such and such family.” Pointing towards them (i.e. Fatima, Hasan and Husain), he said, “They are members of my household. I do not want them to enjoy the luxuries of this world. O Thawban, bring a necklace of date leaves for Fatima and a pair of ivory bracelets." (Dawud 2008, Book of Combing Hair)

It is understandable what kind of love and attachment Sayyidah Fatima (ra) had with the Prophet (saw). He was her father; he was her beloved prophet; he was the beloved prophet of the entire mankind. The one sentence that she spoke after the death of the Prophet (saw) was so full of grief and pain that many eloquent elegies cannot express; after the burial of the Prophet (saw), she said to Anas bin Malik, “O Anas, how could you throw dirt on the body of the Prophet?” (Bukhari 1986, Book of Military Expeditions Led by the Prophet)

Sayyidah Fatima (ra) died six months after the Prophet (saw) passed away. He had consoled her by saying, “You will be the first amongst my family members to meet me. Are you not happy that you will be the head of the women of Paradise?” (Muslim 1994, Book Pertaining to the Merits of the Companions of the Prophet)

Malik bin Anas (93-179 AH, 711-795 CE) has reported from J’afar Sadiq (who had heard from Zainul ‘Abedin) that Sayyidah Fatima (ra) died in the evening between *maghrib* and *‘isha*. Upon hearing that news, Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, Zubair bin Awwam and ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf came to ‘Ali. ‘Ali asked Abu Bakr to lead the funeral prayer. Abu Bakr said, “In your presence?” ‘Ali said, “Yes! Please do so. By Allah, no one will lead

the funeral prayer except you.” Abu Bakr led the funeral prayer and the burial took place the same night. (Baghdadi n.d.)

Muhammad ibn S’ad Baghdadi[23] (784-845 CE, 168-230 AH) has written in his famous book *Kitab Tabaqat al-Kubra*[24]: Mutrif bin ‘Abdullah al-Yasari reported on the authority of ‘Abdul ‘Ala bin Abi Masawir, Hammad and Ibrahim that Abu Bakr led the funeral prayer for Sayyidah Fatima and he did that with four *takbeerat*.

According to Waqidi (748-822 CE, 130-207 AH), Sayyidah Fatima (ra) died on third Ramadan 11 AH and the burial took place the same night. She had given birth to Hasan, Husain, Umm Kulthum and Zainab. May Allah be pleased with them and elevate their ranks!

‘Ali’s *Bay’ah* to Abu Bakr

There are different narration about when Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) took *bay’ah* with Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra). Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Husayn Baihaqi (994-1066 CE, 384-458 AH) reported the following on the authority of Abu Sa’id al-Khudri:

> Abu Bakr ascended the pulpit and cast a glance on the audience. When he did not find ‘Ali among them, he sent for ‘Ali and asked him, “O the Prophet’s cousin and son-in-law, do you wish that the unity among Muslims be torn into pieces?” ‘Ali replied, “O the Prophet’s caliph, I do not have any grudge or complaint against you” and took *bay’ah* with Abu Bakr. (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

Ibn Kathir writes:

> One notable and important aspect of this incident was that ‘Ali took *bay’ah* with Abu Bakr on either the very first day or on the next day after the Prophet’s death. It is a fact that ‘Ali never disassociated himself from Abu Bakr and was not absent from any *salah*.

---

[23] He is a reputable historian and biographer.

[24] It is an 8-volume biography of the Prophet, his companions and scholars of later time.

> It is commonly believed that ‘Ali, out of respect for the sentiment of Fatima (for her disagreement with Abu Bakr in the matter of inheritance), did not take *bay’ah* with Abu Bakr immediately after the death of the Prophet (saw). However, after Fatima passed away six months later, he took *bay’ah* with Abu Bakr in front of general public. (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

Ibn Kathir and other scholars are of the view that ‘Ali’s second *bay’ah* (after the death of Fatima) with Abu Bakr was merely the authentication of the first *bay’ah*. There are many narrations in the books of *hadith* supporting this view.

Test for ‘Ali and His Steadfastness

In the very beginning of Sayyidna Abu Bakr’s caliphate, a delicate situation emerged in which the conduct of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) unmistakably proved that he did not harbor any personal, tribal or political prejudice against Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) and that he was a purely sincere and forthright person.

Ibn ‘Asakir (1106-1175 CE, 499-571 AH) relates the following on the authority of Suwayd bin Ghaflah:

> Abu Sufyan bin Harb (ra) came to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Abbas (ra) and said to them, “O ‘Ali, O ‘Abbas, how did the caliphate go to the clan (i.e. the clan of Abu Bakr) which was lower in status and very small in number? By God, if two of you desire, I can pack Madinah with my allies and supporters.” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) replied, "By Allah, I cannot give permission for that. Had we not considered him (i.e. Abu Bakr) worthy of being the caliph, we would not have so easily allowed him to take that position. O Abu Sufyan, the sign of *iman* is sincerity and truthfulness. Believers wish well for each other and love each other regardless of how far they live from each other. Disparity between heart and tongue and contradiction between speech and practice are signs of hypocrisy.” (Muttaqi n.d.)

Izz al-Din ibn Abi al-Hadid writes in *Sharh Nahj al- Balaghah*:

> When Abu Sufyan (ra) requested Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) to let him (i.e. Abu Sufyan) to take *bay’ah* on his (i.e. ‘Ali’s) hand, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) said, “You desire of me something that I cannot do. We are going to stick to what the Prophet (saw) has bid us to do.” Hearing that Abu Sufyan went to Sayyidna ‘Abbas’s house and said to him, “O Abul Fadl[25], you are more worthy of succeeding your nephew (i.e. the prophet) than anyone else. Give me your hand. I am willing to accept you as the caliph. After I have taken *bay’ah* on your hand, no one will dare object to it.” Hearing that, Sayyidna ‘Abbas (ra) said, “O Abu Sufyan, should I desire for what ‘Ali has rejected?” Thereafter Abu Sufyan returned back.

There is one more narration as follows:

> Fadl bin ‘Abbas said, “O Banu Tamim (the clan of Abu Bakr), you have acquired the caliphate of a prophet who was from us (i.e. Banu Hashim, the clan of the Prophet and ‘Abbas) although we were more deserving than you for it.” Some of the sons of Abu Lahab (uncle of the Prophet) recited some poetic verses with similar theme.
>
> Zubair says that when Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) heard such remarks, he sent for those people and sternly told them, “Do not say anything like that in future. Protection of *deen* is more important than anything else.” According to Yakubi, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) rebuked ‘Utbah bin Abi Lahab when he (i.e. ‘Utbah bin Abi Lahab) recited a couplet which meant: I did not expect that the leadership would slip away from Banu Hashim and from Abul Hasan (i.e. Sayyidna ‘Ali).

Ali’s Cordial Relationship with Abu Bakr

True to his family tradition, noble lineage and spotless character, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) always remained loyal to Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) during the

[25] Fadl was ‘Abbas’s son after whom ‘Abbas was known as Abul Fadl.

entire period of Abu Bakr’s caliphate. He was among Abu Bakr’s most trusted advisers and best well-wishers. He always opted for what was best for Islam and Muslims. He never restrained from giving best advice and full cooperation to Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) in discharging the duties of caliphate. To him, there was nothing dearer and more important than the unity of Muslims and success of the caliphate, as is illustrated by the following incident which Ibn Kathir has described in *Al Bidayah wan Nihayah*:

> Dar Qatni related the incident from Sa’id bin al-Musayyab who had heard it from Ibn ‘Umar. When Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) made up his mind to leave for Dhul Qassa[26] (to wage war against apostates) and had already mounted his camel, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) came forward, caught hold of the rein of Abu Bakr’s camel and said, “O the Caliph of the Prophet, where are you going? I am going to tell you what the Prophet had said at the time of the Battle of Uhad. Put your sword back into the sheath, return back to Madinah and do not inflict the lasting grief of your separation upon us. By Allah, if you suffer even a small wound, it will cause a severe blow to Islam forever.” Thereupon Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) changed his mind and returned back to Madinah. This incident has also been reported by Zakariyah al-Saji and Zuhri on the authority of Sayyidah ‘Aisha (ra). (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

Had Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) any resentment against Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) or any misgiving about his appointment as the caliph; or had he taken *bay’ah* with Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) unwillingly or under duress, the above occasion offered him a golden opportunity to take advantage of the situation. If any of those allegations was true, he would not have dissuaded Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) from going to fight the apostates; had Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) gone into the battlefield, he might have been killed and got removed from the scene automatically. If Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) really hated Sayyidna Abu Bakr (as alleged by some) and wanted to get rid of him, he (i.e. ‘Ali) could have easily arranged for someone to kill Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) in the heat of the battle – a tactic commonly used by power-hungry politicians and rulers to get rid of their opponents.

---

[26] Dhul Qassa is a place at a day’s distance from Madinah.

The fact is that even the ordinary Companions of the Prophet (saw) treated each other with such love, care and respect that it appeared as if they all belonged to a single family. The mutual respect and understanding between prominent Companions such as Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was outstanding, as is illustrated by the following example:

> Muhammad Baqir, the son of Zainul ‘Abedin, relates: Once Abu Bakr was suffering from abdomen pain. ‘Ali warmed his hands by fire and applied them to Abu Bakr’s abdomen. (Suyuti n.d.)

The Companions of the Prophet (saw) were so distinguished that they were recognized by Allah in the following verse of the Holy Quran:

مُّحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّـهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ

> Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those who are with him are strong against unbelievers, but compassionate amongst each other [Al-Fath, 48:29].

Abu Bakr’s Deep Regard for Prophet’s Family

Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) had deep regard and love for the household of the Prophet (saw), especially for the Prophet’s grandsons Hasan and Husain.

The following *hadith* has been narrated by ‘Uqba bin Al-Harith:

> One day Abu Bakr offered *'asr* prayer and then went out for a walk. He saw Hasan playing with boys. He lifted him on to his shoulders and said, "Let my parents be sacrificed for your sake! You resemble the Prophet and not 'Ali." Upon hearing that, 'Ali started smiling. (Bukhari 1986, Book of the virtues and Merits of the Prophet and His Companions)

The trust and love between Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was reciprocal. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had named his son as Abu Bakr. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had adopted Sayyidna Abu Bakr’s son Muhammad, brought him up with great care and affection and later appointed him as a

governor due to which Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was wrongfully blamed for favoritism.

Life of Abu Bakr as the Caliph

Before we look at how Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had reacted to the death of Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra), it is appropriate to look at the caliphate of Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) and see how simply he lived; how simple-hearted he was; how little interest he had for the worldly pleasure; how much he despised pomp and show; and how closely and minutely he tried to imitate the Prophet (saw).

Philip Khury Hitti writes in his famous book *A Short History of the Arabs*:

> Abu Bakr, the conqueror and pacifier of Arabia, lived in patriarchal simplicity. In the first six months of his short reign, he traveled back and forth daily from al-Sunh, where he lived in a moderate household with his wife Habibah, to his capital Madinah and received no stipend since the state had at that time hardly any income. All state business he transacted in the courtyard of the Prophet’s Mosque. (Hitti 1943, 74)

Sir William Muir writes in his book *Annals of the Early caliphate*:

> At his court, Abu Bakr maintained the same simple and frugal life as Mohammad. Guards and servitors there were none, nor anything approaching pomp and circumstance of state. He was diligent in business …. Abu Bakr never spared himself, and many incidents are related of the manner in which he descended to the minutest things. Thus, he would sally forth by night to seek for any destitute or oppressed person…. In the choice of his agents for high office or command, he was absolutely free from nepotism or partiality, and was wise and discerning in his estimate of character. (Muir 1883, 123)

Compilation of the Holy Quran

Compilation of the Holy Quran is one of the greatest accomplishments of Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra). It is no less important that the stand that he took against apostates who had rebelled against Islam after the Prophet’s death.

The loss of a large number of *huffadh*[27] in the battles against apostates was the main reason of why it was felt necessary to compile and preserve the Holy Quran. In the Battle of Yamama[28] alone, at least seventy *huffadh* were martyred and it was feared that many more would be lost in the battles which were looming against the Romans and the Persians.

Though Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) was very concerned about the preservation of the Holy Quran, he was very reluctant to embark on a task that was not undertaken by the Prophet (saw) himself. However he later became convinced of the need and took necessary steps for the same. As a result, according to some reports, the compilation of the Holy Quran in the form in which we recite it today was almost finished before the end of the caliphate of Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra).

Ali’s Reaction to Abu Bakr’s Death

It is reported that when Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) got the news of Sayyidna Abu Bakr’s death, he recited إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ (To Allah we belong and to Him is our return, Al-Baqarah, 2:156) and rushed to Sayyidna Abu Bakr’s residence in a state of grief with tears rolling out of his eyes. He is reported to have said the following on that occasion:

> May Allah’s mercy be upon you! You were the first person to embrace Islam. Your faith was complete. You possessed the strongest faith. You feared Allah the most. You were the most trusted companion of the Prophet. You resembled the Holy Prophet more than any other person in uprightness of character and conduct and in kindness and excellence. You enjoyed

[27] حفاظ – it is the plural of حافظ which means someone who has memorized the entire Quran by heart.

[28] This battle was fought in 632 CE (10 AH) between the forces of the Muslim Caliph Abu Bakr and Musaylimah, a self-proclaimed prophet.

the greatest respect and confidence of the Prophet. May Allah reward you with goodness on behalf of Islam!

You accepted the message of the Prophet at a time when everyone else rejected it. That is why Allah has called you by the name Siddiq (the truthful) in His Book: وَٱلَّذِى جَآءَ بِٱلصِّدْقِ وَصَدَّقَ بِهِۦٓ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْمُتَّقُونَ (And he who brings the Truth and he who confirms it - such are the men who are righteous, Az-Zumar, 39:33); the one who came with the Truth was the Prophet (saw) and the one who confirmed the Truth was Abu Bakr.

You supported the Prophet when others deserted him. You stood behind him while all others withdrew their support from him. In the days of hardship, you were his best companion.

You were honored with the title of "the second of the two." You were the Prophet’s Companion in *hijrah* (migration from Makkah to Madinah). You were the person upon whom Allah conferred serenity and tranquility (while in the Cave during *hijrah*).

You were the one who discharged the duty of caliphate in the best possible manner. You remained firm when all other Companions were wavering. You stood when all others were sitting. You succeeded when all others were failing. You marched with full force when others were stumbling.

Your silence was longest in duration, but your speech was most eloquent. You were the bravest of all. Your actions were the best. It is you about whom the Prophet (saw) had said, “Physically weak, but strong in fulfilling the rights of Allah; humble in demeanor, but dignified in the estimation of Allah; beloved in the earth as well as in the heavens.”

May Allah bless you with the choicest rewards on our behalf and on behalf of Islam!

Chapter 4 - ‘Ali during ‘Umar’s Caliphate

Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) passed away in 634 CE (13 AH). Thereafter Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) became the caliph and remained in that position until he was martyred in 644 CE (23 AH). This chapter covers Sayyidna ‘Ali’s life during the ten years of Sayyidna ‘Umar’s caliphate.

Nomination of ‘Umar as the Caliph

After Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) passed away, Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) became the caliph; at that time Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) was fifty-two years and six months old while Sayyidna ‘Ali was in his thirty-fifth year. In nominating Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) as his successor, Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) knew very well that he (i.e. ‘Umar) possessed all the qualities which were needed to lead a young and growing nation; he was capable of making tough decisions; he possessed a sound and stable mind; and he could form a firm and judicious opinion.

Islam was emerging as a new power. Arabs were rapidly conquering vast areas of land and population. It was a very delicate moment in the history of Islam and Muslims. Problems were so many and so intricate that a person of great wisdom and foresight was needed at the helm. The Roman and Persian empires had started showing cracks in their regimes and signs of their capitulation to Muslims had begun to appear.

Arabs who had been living a nomadic or semi-nomadic life until recently were suddenly finding at their feet abundance of wealth and luxuries coming from the erstwhile empires. They had been living in leather tents for ages and were so unaware of even the basic necessities of life that when they first saw camphor in Iraq, they took it for salt and perhaps some of them used it (in place of salt) in kneading flour. (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

The Arab Muslim conquerors were faced with new challenges and experiences. On one hand, they had to preserve the ascetic and frugal life which Islam had taught them and was practiced in exemplary fashion by the Prophet (saw) and his early Companions. On the other hand, they had to administer and manage the newly conquered lands and nations which were quite advanced in their own culture and civilization.

In light of those circumstances, the selection of Sayyidna ‘Umar as the caliph was nothing short of a divine arrangement. This *ummah* was charged with the duty of preserving Islam in its original form, establishing Islam in the entire world and enlightening humans with morality and good character. Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) was ideally suited for this task and he discharged this duty in such an exemplary manner that history cannot find any other personality who could match his accomplishments.

Dismissal of Khalid bin Walid

Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) was respected as well as feared by all. His awe was unparalleled, a glowing example of which came to light when he terminated Khalid bin Walid (ra) from the position of commander during the Battle of Yarmuk (636 CE, 15 AH). Khalid bin Walid (ra) was the one who was given the title *Saifullah* (the Sword of Allah) by the Prophet (saw) for his valor and stewardship.

Khalid bin Walid (ra) was at the peak of his fame and glory and his mere presence was deemed a guarantee of victory. When Sayyidna ‘Umar’s order to dismiss him and appoint Abu ‘Ubaidah bin Jarrah (ra) in his place as the army chief reached Muslims, he (i.e. Khalid) was commanding the Muslim army in the decisive Battle of Yarmuk against Romans and Muslims were in dire need of his leadership. It was such a delicate moment that many would have fallen victim to ego and self-pride, but the awe of Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) was so great and the *iman* of Khalid bin Walid was so perfect that Khalid bin

Walid (ra) spontaneously uttered, “I wholeheartedly submit to the order of *Amirul Momineen*[1].” (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

When someone remarked to Khalid bin Walid (ra) that such a mighty change at such a delicate moment might create confusion among Muslims and the Muslim army, he said, “As long as ‘Umar is alive, there is no such danger.”

Khalid bin Walid (ra) was the most celebrated army commander at that time, but he did not hesitate even for a moment to bring himself down from the top position to the rank of an ordinary soldier – an unprecedented show of humility and obedience. On the other hand, this incident also shows how much control Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) had over his administration and the army.

Repudiation of ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas

Similar is the story of ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas (ra) who was the conqueror of Egypt. His son Muhammad had a horse race with an Egyptian and the Egyptian’s horse raced ahead of his horse. Muhammad said to the Egyptian horseman, “By the Lord of K’aba! My horse came ahead of yours.” The Egyptian also vowed that his horse had come ahead of Muhammad’s horse. Upon that Muhammad became angry, whipped the Egyptian and said, “Here it is. I am the son of an honored one.” The Egyptian filed his complaint to Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra). Sayidna ‘Umar wrote to ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas (ra) who was the governor of Egypt and asked both him and his son to come to him. When they appeared before him, he told the Egyptian, “Here is the whip. Now beat the boy with this whip” and told ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas (ra), “When did you start making people slaves although their mothers had borne them free?”

Preservation of the Old Arab Lifestyle

Muslims were going through a transient period which every nation has to pass through in its long journey of life. It was a very delicate

[1] That was the title of Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) and later caliphs.

and crucial period for Islam. Arabs had just come out of the nomadic way of life and were now getting exposed to comforts and luxuries of the world. Not long ago, they were living in deserts in leather tents, herding goats and camels and living off their meat and milk. Now they had at their disposal plenty of wealth and all means of ease and comfort.

The two lifestyles were so different that it was enormously difficult to keep a balance between them, but Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) dealt with them in an exemplary manner. His personal lifestyle did not change a bit; he remained as simple, frugal and austere as before. On the other hand, he also kept an eye on others and insured that abundance of wealth and luxuries did not change the lifestyle and culture of Arabs. Huge amount of wealth was pouring in from all directions, but he kept a strict account of every penny that was coming in the public treasury. Ibn Kathir has described the following in his book *Al Bidayah wan Nihayah*:

> When ‘Umar went to Jerusalem, he found the Prophet’s Companions dressed in robes which were made of velvet. He could not tolerate the sight of Arabs wearing that kind of outfit and asked them to put those garments off. Later when the Companions explained to him that they were in a state of war and they were using those garments to shield their weapons, he accepted their excuse. (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

Tariq bin Shihab (ra) has narrated the following:

> ‘Umar bin Khattab was once on way to Syria. When he came across a creek, he dismounted from his camel, took off his socks, placed them over his shoulder and then walked over the creek with the camel’s rein in his hand. People were amazed to see this; they expected the servant to carry the socks and hold the camel’s rein. Abu ‘Ubaidah, the commander of the Muslim army, remarked to ‘Umar, “You have (unduly) shown yourself to be too humble in front of the inhabitants of this place.” Umar then struck Abu ‘Ubaidah on his chest and said, “I wish someone other than you would have said this. O Abu ‘Ubaidah, you (i.e. Arabs) were a petty, humiliated and

> disgraced nation. Allah honored you with Islam. If you seek honor from some other means, Allah will again disgrace you.” (Hakim Nishapuri n.d.)

Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) wrote the following to his governors who were posted in non-Arab (*‘ajm*[2]) territories:

> Do not adopt the dresses and comforts of the people of *‘ajm*. Do not forsake walking and working in the sun as it is the bath of Arabs. Stick to hard work and practice starving. Be in the habit of sleeping on rough mats. Keep on wearing coarse and worn-out clothes. Do not abandon lances and spears. Mount your horses by leaping onto them. Continue archery and shooting.

The following statement by Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) shows his firmness, resilience and determination in maintaining the true spirit of Islam:

> Islam has just come out of its infancy. Quraish consider wealth as a blessing of Allah, but remain negligent towards His worship. They should know that as long as ‘Umar is alive, it cannot happen. I am standing on the corridor to watch and protect them. I am holding them by their necks and feet lest they fall in the fire.

Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) was extraordinarily gifted in understanding the psyche of people. For example, he deliberately kept many prominent *Shabah* (Companions of the Prophet) in Madinah and told them, “I am most afraid that you may spread out in many different countries.” He understood that people in the conquered lands would flock around important personalities and then would develop misgivings about them which would divide them in different groups and parties. He knew that if he was not strict in that matter, it would give rise to many problems and would ultimately lead to disorder and lawlessness.

Justice Syed Ameer ‘Ali writes:

> The short government of Abu Bakr was too fully occupied with the labour of pacifying the desert tribes

[2] عجم means non-Arab.

> to afford time for any systematic regulation of the provinces. But with the reign of Omar a truly great man commenced that sleepless care for j the welfare of the subject nations which characterised the early Moslem governments. (S. A. Ali, The Spirit of Islam 2005, 278)

> Omar's accession to the Caliphate was of immense value to Islam. He was a man of strong moral fibre and a keen sense of justice, possessed of great energy and force of character. (S. A. Ali, A Short History of the Saracenes 1900, 27)

> Stern but just, far-sighted, thoroughly versed in the character of his people, he was especially fitted for the leadership of the unruly Arabs. He had held the helm with a strong hand, and severely repressed the natural tendency to demoralisation among nomadic tribes and semi-civilised people when coming in contact with the luxury and vices of cities. He had established the Diwan, or department of finance, to which was entrusted the administration of the revenues; and had introduced fixed rules for the government of the provinces. He was a man of towering height, strong build, and fair complexion. Of simple habits, austere and frugal, always accessible to the meanest of his subjects, wandering about at night to inquire into the condition of the people without any guard or court - such was the greatest and most powerful ruler of the time. (S. A. Ali, A Short History of the Saracenes 1900, 43-44)

Sir William Muir writes:

> So died Omar, next to the Prophet the greatest in the kingdom of Islam; for it was all within these ten years that, by his wisdom, patience, and vigour, the dominion was reached over Syria, Egypt, and Persia, which Islam has ever since maintained. Abu Bekr beat down the apostate

> tribes; but at his death the armies of Islam had but just crossed the Syrian frontier. Omar began his reign the master only of Arabia. He died the Caliph of an empire embracing Persia, Egypt, and some of the fairest provinces of the Byzantine throne. Yet throughout this marvellous fortune he never lost the equipoise of a wise and sober judgment, nor exalted himself above the frugal and familiar style of the Arab Chief. ‘Where is the Caliph?' would the visitor from distant provinces inquire, as he looked around the court of the Great Mosque; and all the while the monarch sat in homely guise before him. (Muir 1883, 283)

Expansion of Islamic State under ‘Umar

It is not possibly to even briefly describe the conquests which took place during the caliphate of Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra). At that time there were two great empires – Roman and Persian – which had amongst themselves divided the then entire civilized world and their political, cultural and social systems were dominant all over the world. How did Muslims conquer provinces and cities which were controlled by those two powers? How did they establish new cities? How did they bring law and order to unruly lands? These topics have been adequately covered in other books of history and biographies of Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra).

‘Ali’s Co-operation with ‘Umar

However in the context of the biography of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), it is important to look at the relationship that he had with Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra); how they treated each other; how much they trusted each other; how much they sacrificed for each other; how much they practiced the Quranic injunction البروالتقوای (piety, righteousness, kindness, etc) in their dealing with each other; and how much Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) valued the opinion of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) in running the affairs of the state. Here are some examples to illustrate the level of understanding and co-operation that existed between Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra).

Naf’e al-Aythi relates:

> Once I entered the barn (where animals which people had given as *sadaqah* were kept) with ‘Umar and ‘Ali. ‘Umar

> was clad in two sheets with one wrapped around his body and the other covering his head. The sun was hot and ‘Umar (ra) was inspecting the camels. ‘Umar was looking at the camels’ color and teeth (to determine their age) and dictating details to ‘Uthman who was sitting in shade. ‘Ali, who was standing by the side of ‘Umar, told ‘Uthman, “Quran says: One of the two women said, ‘Dear father, hire him; the best man you can hire is someone who is strong and trustworthy[3]’” and then said pointing to ‘Umar, “This is the one who may be called strong and trustworthy.”

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was a very trusted and supportive adviser of Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra). He was very good at solving complex problems in a very simple manner. Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) is reported to have said, “Was ‘Ali not there, ‘Umar would have perished.”

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was so witty and good at solving problems that an adage such as “A complicated issue is here, but Abul Hasan[4] is not present to solve it” became a commonplace in books of history and literature.

It is reported that the Prophet (saw) had said: The most capable person in untangling and solving difficult problems is ‘Ali.

When Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) went to Jerusalem, he deputed Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) as his substitute.

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had married his daughter Sayyidah Umm Kulthum to Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra). This shows how much respect Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had for Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) and what kind of understanding existed between them.

‘Ali’s Concern for Islam and Muslims

How dear was the cause of Islam and Muslims to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra)? How sincere was he to Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra)? A definite answer to these questions came on the eve of the Battle of Nahavand[5] which took place

[3] Chapter Al-Qasas [28:26]
[4] Abu Hasan was one of the nicknames of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra).
[5] Nahavand is a city in the province of Hamdan in Iran.

between Muslims and Persians in 642 CE (21 AH). The way Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) conducted himself on that occasion and the advice that he gave to Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) at that time provide enough testimony to confirm his sincerity and faithfulness to Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra).

After Muslims had defeated the army of Persian general Al-‘Ula and captured Al-Ahwaz, the Persians established contact with their emperor Yazdegerd III who was in Merv at that time and aroused him to wage a fresh war against Muslims. The governors from Al-Bab to Sind and the rulers of Kharasan and Halwan also got enthused and they all colluded to launch an all-out assault on Muslims.

All the forces (Persians and their allies) gathered in Nahavand. Yazdegerd III sent an army of 150,000 soldiers under the command of his son Mardan Shah. Yazdegerd III did everything possible to instill in the minds of soldiers that the Sassanid Empire was at the brink of extinction and it was their religious duty to save it at any cost.

S’ad bin Abi Waqqas (ra), who was the commander of the Muslim army, wrote to Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) and appraised him with the latest situation. He also wrote that the people of Kufa would like to have his (i.e. ‘Umar’s) permission to launch a pre-emptive attack on the enemy as it would go a long way in demoralizing the enemy. Later when S’ad bin Abi Waqqas (ra) came to Madinah, he presented the same plea to Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra).

Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) convened a meeting of his advisers and told them, “The situation is extremely dangerous. I intend to take everyone who is with me or I have control over, camp at a place somewhere between the two cities (maybe, between Kufa and Nahavand) and direct the forces to fight the enemy from there until Allah either opens the gates of victory for us or decides whatever He wills. If Allah gives our forces victory, we will crush the enemy in its own land.”

Talha bin ‘Ubaidullah (ra) said, “You understand the situation better. Whatever you decide and whatever you order, we will accept it.”

Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) said, “O Amirul Momineen, my opinion is that you should order the people of Syria and Yemen to proceed from their respective places towards the enemy and you along with the people of Harmain (i.e. Makkah and Madinah) should proceed to Kufa and then to Basra. In this way, all the Muslims will be attacking the enemy jointly.”

Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) looked towards Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and wanted to know his opinion. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) disagreed with the pinions of both Talha bin ‘Ubaidullah (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra). Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) told Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra), “You should not leave Madinah. You should stay put here. Depute someone else to lead the army. The people and army of Basra should come to Iraq. All the governors should remain in their headquarters and you should stay in Madinah because if something unfortunate happens to the caliph (i.e. ‘Umar) during the battle, Islam and Muslims will suffer fatal blow from which it will be impossible to recover.”

Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) agreed with the opinion of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and acted accordingly. Thereafter Sayyidna ‘Umar wanted to know who should be appointed as the commander of the army. Those who were present said, “You know better who is where and what is his capacity.” Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) appointed N’uman bin Muqarin al-Muzni to head the army and people agreed with that choice.

As reported in *Nahj al-Balaghah* (“The Path of Eloquence”), Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had expressed his opinion as follows:

> It is a matter of Islam. Victory or defeat is not dependent upon the size of our forces. This is the *deen* (religion) of Allah which He has decreed to prevail. He himself has prepared His army. He Himself has helped it (i.e. *deen* of Islam) and whatever progress it has made is only the outcome of His help. He will keep His promise and protect His army.
>
> The caliph is like a thread which binds and keeps all the beads together. If the thread breaks, all the beads will go loose and will never be able to come together in the original form. Today Arabs are few in number, but Islam has made them a force to reckon with. They prevail because they are united. To them, you are like a pivot around which they revolve. Direct them to fight the fire of battle. If you are not there, Arabs from all the surrounding areas will attack you. The borders which you will leave behind are more critical than those which you will go to defend.

> When the people of *‘ajm* (i.e. Persians) will see you, they will say, “He is the real force and jewel of Arabs. If we get rid of him, we will become free forever.” You have mentioned that they have come out to fight Muslims, but when they will see you, it will only strengthen their resolve and reinvigorate their energy. Allah dislikes their move (to fight Muslims) more than you do, but He is fully capable of reversing the outcome.
>
> You have mentioned that they have come out in large numbers, but you should remember that the victories which have come our way had nothing to do with numbers. We have only fought with Allah’s help and trust in Him. (al-Radi n.d.)

Similar situation had arisen when Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) was consulting his advisers regarding the Battle of Yarmuk which took place in 636 CE (15 AH) against Romans. Not only did the opinion of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) prove right, but it also serves as a glowing testimony to his absolute sincerity.

The Battle of Yarmuk was the most important expedition to Syria as it paved way for all the later Muslim victories in that region. Abu ‘Ubaidah bin Jarrah (ra), who was the commander of the Muslim army, sent a messenger to Caliph ‘Umar (ra) with the message that Roman forces were converging in huge number from both the land and sea to attack Muslims.

Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) convened a meeting of *Ansar* and *Muhajirin* and read Abu ‘Ubaidah’s letter to them. The letter greatly affected them. Some cried out of grief. Some felt overwhelmed and sought Sayyidna ‘Umar’s permission to go to Syria and fight by the side of their brethren. ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) suggested that Sayyidna ‘Umar should himself join the forces and personally lead the battle.

However Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) disagreed with the above mentioned opinions and said the following:

> Allah has taken upon Himself the responsibility of protecting those who possess *deen*. It is His responsibility to safeguard the places and boundaries *deen*. Those whom He gave victory were too few to have succeeded in normal circumstances. Those whom He protected were too weak

> to have protected themselves against their enemies. He is alone. He is forever. He does not die.
>
> If you go with a small army and fight the enemy, there is a danger of defeat in case of which there will no place on the earth for Muslims to take refuge and there will be no one after you to direct them. Thus depute an experienced person to lead the army and send with him a band of seasoned and dedicated fighters. If Allah gives victory, it is well and good. If not, you will be there to console and protect Muslims.

The above discourse proves beyond doubt that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had no ill feeling towards Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra); he did not have any misgiving about Sayyidna ‘Umar’s caliphate; and he did not have any desire to depose Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra). He in fact had nothing to do with these petty and malicious notions. Nothing but the welfare of Islam and Muslims was his motto and his advice duly reflected his vision, wisdom and foresight. May Allah give him the reward that is meant for the most chosen ones!

It is also worthwhile to mention the advice that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) gave to Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) when he (i.e. ‘Umar) sought the opinion of his advisers regarding the invitation that he had received from the Christians of Jerusalem.

The Patriarch of Jerusalem had put the condition that he would surrender the city to Muslims and hand over the keys to them only if the caliph of Muslims came in person to sign the treaty. Abu ‘Ubaidah bin Jarrah (ra) wrote to Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) and informed him of the Patriarch’s condition. Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) consulted *Sahabah* and sought their opinion in that regard.

Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) had the opinion that Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) should not accept the Patriarch’s invitation so that the enemy felt more demoralized. But Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) opined that Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) must go as it was a momentous honor which would be remembered forever and such an opportunity was only rare; he also said that it would relieve the burden on Muslims. Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) liked Sayyidna ‘Ali’s opinion and got ready for the trip to Jerusalem. Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) appointed Sayyidna ‘Ali to be in-charge of caliphate in his absence and departed for Jerusalem in 637 CE (16 AH).

‘Umar’s Travel to Jerusalem

Readers must be curious to know as to how Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra), whose awe made Romans and Persians tremble, traveled from Madinah to Jerusalem and what kind of pomp and show he carried with him in that journey.

Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) arrived in Jabiah riding a grey camel. A part of his scalp which had no hair was shining in the bright sun since he wore neither a cap nor a turban. His feet were dangling on either side of the camel as there was no saddle. He had a bedspread which he used as the saddlecloth while riding the camel and as the mat to lay down for rest. He had a bag that was stuffed with date leaves which he used it as a pillow. He was wearing a coarse cotton shirt which had a number of stains and patches.

On the way to Jerusalem, he stopped in a town and called for the head of the town who was a Christian. In the meantime, he wanted to get his shirt washed and repaired and thus needed to borrow a shirt. People presented to him a shirt that was made of *katan*[6]. He asked, “What kind of fabric is this made of?” They said, “*Katan*.” He asked, “What is *katan*?” People explained to him what *katan* was. When his own shirt was brought back after washing, he took off the borrowed shirt and put on his own shirt.

The Christian head of the town said, “You are the king of Arabs. Camel ride is disdained in this country. If you put on a fine dress and ride a mule, it will enhance your esteem in the eyes of Romans.” Sayyidna ‘Umar said, “We are those who have gained honor through Islam. We cannot leave aside the pleasure of Allah and adopt other things.’

A mule without any saddle or bridle was brought to him. He put his tunic on its back and mounted on it. But soon after, he said, “Hold it, hold it. I have never seen people riding a devil before.” His camel was then brought and he mounted on it.

It may be worthwhile to also look at the other journey which Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) undertook to Syria in 639 CE (18 AH). He appointed Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) to look after the duties of caliphate during his absence and then set out for Syria. Sir William Muir writes:

---

[6] Katan is fine cotton.

> His way lay through the Christian settlement of Ayla, at the head of the Gulf of Acaba. The reception met with here brings out well the simplicity of Omar, and his kindly feeling toward the Christians. He journeyed on a camel with small pomp or following; and as he was minded to enter the village unrecognised, he changed places with his servant. ‘Where is the Ameer?' cried the eager crowds as they streamed forth from the village to witness the Caliph's advent. “He is before you,” replied Omar, and he drove his camel on. So they hurried forward, thinking that the great Caliph was beyond, and left Omar to alight unobserved at the house of the bishop, with whom he lodged during the heat of the day. (Muir 1883, 236)

Umar’s Relationship with the Prophet’s Household

Despite the awe Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) commanded, the justice that he established between people and the preoccupation that he had with the responsibilities of caliphate, he was very particular about taking care of the family members of the Prophet (saw) and gave preference to them over his own family. The following are a few examples to illustrate the same.

Among the incidents which have been narrated by Sayyidna Husain (ra), the son of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), one goes like this:

> One day Sayyidna ‘Umar told me, “My son, keep on visiting me.” So I went to see him one day. He was in a private conversation with someone and his son Ibn ‘Umar was waiting outside as he had not been granted permission to enter the room. Seeing that, I returned back without visiting him. After a few days, when he came across me, he said, “Son, you did not come to see me.” I said, “I had come, but you were in private conversation with someone. I saw Ibn ‘Umar return back. So I also came back without seeing you.” He then said, “You are more entitled than ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar to get permission to come in. The *iman* that has been rooted in our hearts and minds is a

> favor, first from Allah and then from your family. Thereafter he put his hand on his head.”

Ibn S’ad narrates from J’afar Sadiq bin Uhammad al-Baqir who heard from his father ‘Ali bin Husain (commonly known as Zainul ‘Abedin) saying:

> ‘Umar received a few pieces of *hullah* (shirt and trouser made of same fabric) from Yemen which he distributed among people. People came to the Prophet’s *masjid* wearing those garments. ‘Umar was sitting between the pulpit and the Prophet’s grave. People were coming, saying greetings to him and he was replying to them. In the meantime, Hasan and Husain came out of their mother’s house and they did not have new clothes on them. That sight made ‘Umar sad. Seeing him sad, people asked, “What is the matter?” He said, “I am sad because of these boys. There was no *hullah* which could fit their size and the sheets were too long for them.” So he sent a messenger to Yemen to get *hullah* made for Hasan and Husain at the earliest. When the outfits came and Hasan and Husain wore them, ‘Umar felt gratified.

Abu J’afar narrates:

> When Allah opened the doors of affluence and plenty, Sayyidna ‘Umar wanted to fix a monthly or daily stipend for everyone. But the question was: How to fix the amount and what should be the criteria? He gathered eminent *Sahabah* and sought their opinion in that matter.
>
> ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) said to Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra), “Begin it with yourself.” Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) said, “By Allah! I will start with the one who was closest to the Prophet and then I will go to Banu Hashim, the Prophet’s clan.” He fixed the amounts of stipend for Sayyidna ‘Abbas (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra). He then fixed the amounts for those members of Banu Hashim who had participated in the Battle of Badr. He also set rules of precedence among various clans, kept his own clan (Banu ‘Adi) at the very bottom of the list and gave special consideration to those who had participated in the Battle of

> Badr. He also gave special consideration to Sayyidna Hasan (ra) and Sayyidna Husain (ra).

Shibli Nomani writes in *Al Faruq* which is a biography of Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra):

> Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) never made any decision in important matters without consulting Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra). Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was equally cognizant in giving the best and most appropriate advice. When Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) went to Jerusalem, he deputed Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) to take care of the duties of caliphate. The trust and understanding between the two was such that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) gave his daughter Umm Kulthum in the marriage of Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra). (Nomani 2011)

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) gave the name of ‘Umar to his one son, Abu Bakr to another and ‘Uthman to the third. Usually people name their children after those whom they admire and look at ideal personalities.

Inception of Islamic Calendar

The inception of Islamic calendar will be remembered as one of the greatest accomplishments of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) for as long as Islam and Muslims remain in existence this world.

In the days of Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra), several methods were in use to record dates of important events and incidents. So he sought opinions of *Sahabah* so that a single method could be adopted and the recording of dates could be done in a uniform manner. There were various opinions in this regard. Some favored the Persian method in which a year began with the birth or coronation of a king and some favored the Roman calendar system. Some suggested that the Islamic calendar should commence on the day the Prophet (saw) declared his prophethood. However Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) suggested that the Prophet’s migration from Makkah to Madinah should be used as the basis for the Islamic calendar. This opinion was liked by all and

Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) accordingly declared that the Islamic era would commence on the first of the month of Muharram of the year of migration[7].

Generally, a calendar is associated with the birth or death of an eminent person. Or, it is linked to a historical victory or the establishment of an empire. But it is the uniqueness of Islam that even its very name (i.e. Islam) is derived from its message (i.e. peace) and not from the name of its messenger (i.e. Prophet Muhammad) although he is the greatest human being born on the face of the earth and his name is dearest to Allah and Muslims.

There is a great wisdom in associating the Islamic calendar to the migration of the Prophet (saw). In doing so, the stamp of the message of Islam has been permanently cast on it. Anyone trying to go into its origin will find that *‘aqeedah*[8] (faith) is the most cherished treasure and everything of this world may be risked and sacrificed to preserve it.

There is another fine point in linking the Islamic calendar to the Prophet’s migration. It marks the beginning of a new era in the human history. The years that followed the migration saw mankind scale new heights of glory and accomplishment in all sphere of life.

Martyrdom of Sayyidna ‘Umar

It was the practice of Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) not to permit any *dhimmi*[9] to enter Madinah and live there. But Mughirah bin Sh’uba (ra), the governor of Kufa, asked Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) to grant a special permission to his slave Abu Lulu to come to Madinah and live there.

Abu Lulu was from Persia and his real name was Firuz. He was a Magian by faith, but some say that he was a Christian. During the war between Romans and Persians, he was captured in Nahavand by Romans who later handed him over to Muslims. He finally came to Madinah with other captives and slaves after the Battle of Nahavand in 642 CE (21 AH). It is

---

[7] Muharram 01, 0001 corresponds to July 15, 622 CE. The Prophet (saw) left Makkah in the night of 12th and 13th September 622 CE.

[8] عقیدہ (faith)

[9] ذمی – non-Muslim residents of an Islamic state. The state gives them protection and they pay *jizya* (a kind of tax) to the state.

said that whenever he saw a boy in Madinah, he put his hand on the boy’s head and said, “’Umar has eaten my heart.”

Abu Lulu was a good source of income for Mughirah bin Sh’uba (ra) as he (i.e. Abu Lulu) was a master blacksmith, carpenter and engraver. He used to make stone-mills and Mughirah bin Sh’uba (ra) used to collect four *dirhams* from him daily.

One day Abu Lulu came to Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) and said, “Mughirah makes me work very hard. Tell him to reduce the amount that he charges.” Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) asked him, “What kind of work do you do?” He told Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) about his work. Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) then said, “Keeping in view the work you do, the amount charged by Mughirah is not excessive. Fear Allah. Go and serve your master faithfully.” That made Abu Lulu very furious. It is reported that Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) had in his mind that when he would see Mughirah bin Sh’uba (ra), he would tell him to be lenient to Abu Lulu.

Abu Lulu acquired a double-edged dagger and treated it with poison. He then went to Hurmuzan[10], showed his dagger to him and asked, “How will this dagger work?” Hurmuzan replied, “No one can survive it.” Thus a Magian-Persian conspiracy was in making which was fuelled by personal anger and racial (or national) hatred.

‘Abudur Rahman bin Abi Bakr reported (on the very day Sayyidna ‘Umar was martyred) that he had seen Hurmuzan, Abu Lulu and Jufayna speaking in whispers and a dagger falling down from someone’s hand. That is why many historians hold the view that the assassination of Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) was the result of a well-planned conspiracy which was hatched together by Jews and Persians[11]. There is nothing new in it. Overwhelmed by frustration and hunger for revenge, people who have been conquered and have lost their land and freedom often target key figures of their enemies.

[10] He was a former Persian prince. He was captured in the Battle of Nahavand and was livening in Madinah as a captive.

[11] Butrus al-Bustani, a Lebanese Maronite Christian, writes: The real cause of ‘Umar’s assassination was not what historians have generally written or understood. In fact non-Muslims had instigated that slave to kill ‘Umar so that Islam could be weakened and its empire could be demolished.

Details of Sayyidna ‘Umar’s Martyrdom

On the day Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) was martyred, he stood to lead the *fajr* (i.e. morning) prayer. The People standing behind him heard him say *takbir tahrimah*[12] and soon thereafter they heard him say, “The dog has killed me.” Abu Lulu had stabbed Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) six times by piercing his dagger in Sayyidna ‘Umar’s back and shoulder. Abu Lulu then fled from the scene and stabbed as many as thirteen persons as he was running away.

When ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf saw Abu Lulul fleeing, he threw a large cloak on him. Abu Lulu got entangled in the cloak and fell down. Thinking that he had been caught and could not escape, he killed himself by slitting his throat with his own dagger.

On the other hand, Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) had fallen down and was reciting the Quranic verse وَكَانَ أَمْرُ ٱللَّهِ قَدَرًا مَّقْدُورًا (The command of Allah is a decree determined; Al-Ahzab, 33:38). He asked, “Who attacked him?” He was told, “The slave of Mughirah bin Sh’uba.” He then said, “Thanks Allah, my killer is not someone who has prostrated before Him. Otherwise, he would have argued with me on the Day of Judgment. This is not the deed of an Arab.”

Sayyidna ‘Umar sent for his son ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar (ra) and told him to go and ask Sayyidah ‘Aisha (ra) if he could be buried by the side of the Prophet (saw). He also instructed his son not to refer him (while talking to Sayyidah ‘Aisha) as the *Amirul Momineen* as he was no longer the chief of Muslims.

‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar (ra) went to Sayyidah ‘Aisha (ra) who was weeping and conveyed his father’s *salam* (greeting) and message to her. Sayyidah ‘Aisha said, “I wanted to reserve that spot for myself but I will give him preference over myself today.”

When ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar (ra) came back, Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) asked him, “What news have you brought? ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar replied, “*Amirul Momineen*, your desire has been fulfilled. She has granted permission as

[12] At the very beginning of the prayer, the *imam* (one who leads the prayer) says *Allaho Akbar*. This is called *takbir tahrimah.*

you wished.” Sayyidna ‘Umar said, “All praise is due to Allah. There was nothing more important to me than that wish.” Then he added, “After my soul has departed, carry my body on a cot, wait at the door (of the dwelling of Sayyidah ‘Aisha) and ask her for permission once again. If she does not give permission, take my body to the public cemetery of Muslims and bury me there. I am afraid that she might have given permission (first time) because of my position of authority.”

Muslims were so shocked and grieved as if they had never seen such a tragedy before. Sayyidah ‘Aisha (ra) granted the permission again and Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) was finally buried and laid to rest by the side of the Prophet (saw) and Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra). May Allah be pleased with all of them!

Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) was attacked on 26th Dhul Hijjah 23 AH (2nd November 644 CE). He died three days later and was buries on 1st Muharram 24 AH. He was 63 years old at the time of his death.

Sayyidna ‘Ali’s Grief

Abu Juhayfah (ra) relates:

> After ‘Umar passed away, his body lay covered with a sheet of cloth and I was present there. ‘Ali came, uncovered ‘Umar’s face and said, “O Abu Hafs, May Allah have mercy on you! By Allah, after the Prophet (saw), there is no one other than you with whose book of deeds I would like to go in front of Allah. (Hanbal 2012)

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was weeping at the death of Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra). He was asked, “Why are you weeping?” He replied, “I am weeping at the death of ‘Umar. The death of ‘Umar has created such a vacuum in Islam that it can never be filled again.”

Mutual Understanding among *Sahabah*

Before finishing this chapter, I like to share with the readers some reflections of my dear and respected friend Dr. Mustafa Saba’i on the character and qualities of *Sahabah*.

The highest level of mutual co-operation that can be imagined was prevalent among the Companions of the Prophet (saw). Their treatment of each other was exemplary. They had utmost respect and regard for each other. They always wished well for each other. They expressed their differences in a very straightforward manner. If they found something which was not right, they did not hesitate in saying so; friendship, kinship or other considerations did not deter them from speaking truth.

They were very simple-hearted people. They had no trace of duplicity, hypocrisy or deceitfulness – a trait that was unique to Arabs. They treated each other like real brothers. They not harbor any grudge against each other. They showed no sign of arrogance. They obeyed their *amir* (leader) very faithfully. Disobedience and disloyalty was not in their nature.

They were architects of new nation, culture and civilization. Their knowledge was vast and their understanding was deep. They were tough, rugged and hardworking. They were used to taking risks and new frontiers.

Chapter 5 - ‘Ali during ‘Uthman’s Caliphate

Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) passed away in 644 CE (23 AH). Thereafter Sayyidna ‘Uthman bin ‘Affan (ra) became the caliph and remained in that position until he was martyred in 656 CE (35 AH). This chapter covers Sayyidna ‘Ali’s life during the twelve years of Sayyidna ‘Uthman’s caliphate.

Bay’ah to Sayyidna ‘Uthman

Before Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) passed away, he appointed a *shura* (consultative committee) of six[1] prominent *Sahabah* to select and appoint the next caliph. The members of this *shura* were: ‘Uthman bin ‘Affan, ‘Ali bin Abi Talib, Talha bin ‘Ubaidullah, Zubair bin Awwam, S’ad bin Abi Waqqas and ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf.

Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) felt uneasy about designating any of the above as the caliph. He said, “It is not possible for me to carry the burden during my lifetime as well as after the death. If Allah wills well for you, He will unite all of you on the one who is the best amongst you as He did by uniting all of us on the best person (i.e. Abu Bakr) after the death of the Prophet (saw).”

The level of Sayyidna ‘Umar’s piety and fear of Allah was so high that he did not include his cousin S’aid bin Zaid (ra) in the *shura* as he was fearful that the *shura* might select him (i.e. S’aid) as the next caliph on the basis of his close relationship with ‘Umar; S’aid bin Zaid was also one of the ten persons whom the Prophet (saw) had given the glad tiding of being among the dwellers of Paradise.

Sayyidna ‘Umar told the *shura*, “‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar (his son) will also participate in your deliberations, but he will have no authority[2]. Until the caliph is selected, Suhaib bin Sinan al-Rumi will lead Muslims in prayers

[1] These six are among the ten persons whom the Prophet (saw) had given the glad tiding of being among the dwellers of Paradise.
[2] In today’s terminology, ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar was only an observer.

for three days”. He also said, “When the *shura* comes together, some people should keep an eye so that it reaches a decision soon. I do not think that it will give preference to anyone over ‘Uthman or ‘Ali.”

After the burial of Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra), Miqda bin al-Aswad (ra) gathered the members of the *shura* at his house. The deliberations became a bit heated, but it was ultimately agreed that the three persons who were not interested in caliphate should withdraw their claims in favor of one of the remaining three. Thus Zubair bin Awwam (ra) withdrew his name in favor of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), S’ad bin Abi Waqqas (ra) in favor of ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) and Talha bin ‘Ubaidullah (ra) in favor of ‘Uthman bin ‘Affan (ra). That left three as possible candidates: ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra), Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra).

‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) asked Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra), “Who among two of you is willing to withdraw his candidacy?” He continued, “I will ask the one who withdraws his name to select one of the remaining two and I will beseech him to select for the sake of Allah and Islam the one who is the best among the two and hand over caliphate to him.”

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) remained silent. Thereafter ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) said, “I relinquish my right and swear by Allah that I will utilize my best judgment with full sincerity to select from you the one who appears best to me and will hand over the responsibility of caliphate to him.” Both Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) agreed with the proposal of ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra).

‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) talked to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) individually, acknowledged their merits and virtues and took a pledge from each of them that whoever was appointed as the caliph would do justice and whoever was not appointed would obey the other. Both again agreed to the proposal of ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra).

Thereafter ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) got up and talked to others to seek their opinion about the two candidates. He talked to people (individually) in private as well as in public. He sought opinions of women, children, Bedouins and caravans which had come from outside. He remained fully occupied in seeking opinions from every segment of population for three days and three nights. He slept only little during those days and nights and remained busy in seeking opinions, praying, supplicating and doing

istikharah[3]. He did not find even two persons who did not prefer Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra).

On the fourth day after the burial of Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra), the member of the *shura* got together at the same place where they had gathered first time. Addressing Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra), ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) said, “I have elicited opinions of people about you and I did not find anyone who considers someone else equal to better than you.” Thereafter he took pledge from them that they would do justice if appointed as the caliph and submit to the other otherwise.

After taking pledge from both Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra), ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) took them to the *masjid*. *Azan* for the Friday prayer was called. ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) put on the turban that the Prophet (saw) had gifted to him, fastened his sword and made sure that all the eminent *Ansar* and *Muhajirin* were present in the masjid. The *masjid* was packed to capacity and was overflowing with people. Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra), who was known for his shyness, could not get a place except in the last row. ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) ascended the pulpit, stood there quietly for some time and made a lengthy *d’ua* (invocation) which could hardly be heard because of huge gathering. He then addressed the audience saying:

> Brethren! I elicited your opinions both privately and publicly. I did not find anyone who considered someone other than ‘Ali and ‘Uthman to be more qualified for being the caliph. O ‘Ali, stand up and come close to me.

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) came close to ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) and stood by him. ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) held Sayyidna ‘Ali’s hand and said to him, “Do you declare solemnly on my hand that you will uphold the commandments of Allah and His Prophet and conduct the affairs of caliphate on the pattern of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar?” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) replied, “I cannot promise, but I will try to discharge the duties of caliphate to the best of my ability.” ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) then released the hand of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra).

[3] It is a way of asking Allah to guide to what is beneficial and to save from what may be harmful.

‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) then asked Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) to come close to him. After Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) came near him, ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) grabbed Sayyidna ‘Uthman’s hand and said, “Do you promise on my hand that you will abide by the Book of Allah and the *sunnah* of the Prophet and follow the path of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar?” Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) said, “Yes[4].”

Hholding Sayyidna ‘Uthman’s hand, ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) raised his head towards the sky and said, “O Allah, listen and be witness. O Allah, listen and be witness. The burden that I had on my shoulder, I am transferring that to the shoulder of ‘Uthman.”

Thereafter people gathered near the pulpit and took *bay’ah* at the hands of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra). ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) remained sitting on the pulpit where the Prophet (saw) used to sit while Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) was sitting on the lower step. People kept on coming and taking *bay’ah* at the hands of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra). Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) also took *bay’ah* at the hands of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra). However there is a difference of opinion whether he was the first or the last person to do so.

‘Uthman’s standing in the Society

Given the maturity and merits that Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) possessed and the prestige that he enjoyed in the society, his selection as the caliph was quite fitting and justified. At the time he became the caliph, he was 70 years old according to the lunar calendar and 68 years old according to the Gregorian calendar.

He was born in 577 CE, six years after the Year of the Elephant. He was thus about five or six years younger than the Prophet (saw). He embraced Islam before the Prophet (saw) started going to Darul Arqam[5]. He was married to the Prophet’s daughter Sayyidah Ruqaiya (ra). When the

[4] People were familiar with the caliphate of Sayyidna Abu Bakr and Sayyidna ‘Umar and were satisfied with their style of governance. People felt that it was most suitable for running the affairs of caliphate and was free from any danger or deviation. That is why when Sayyidna ‘Uthman accepted the conditions that was put before him, ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf felt satisfied. On the other hand, though Sayyidna ‘Ali had the right not

[5] This was the house of Al Arqam where the Prophet (saw) and his Companions used to get together.

persecution by the Quraish became unbearable, he asked the Prophet (saw) to permit him to migrate to Abyssinia with his wife. The Prophet (saw) gave him the permission and remarked, “They (i.e. ‘Uthman and Ruqaiya) are the first husband and wife to migrate after the children of Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Lot.”

Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) migrated from Makkah to Abyssinia with his wife in 614 CE, about eight years before the Prophet’s migration from Makkah to Madinah; about fifteen more Makkans had accompanied them in that migration. Only a few months later, after hearing that Quraish had accepted Islam, they returned back to Makkah. But when they came to know that the news of Quraish’s acceptance of Islam was wrong, some of them returned back to Abyssinia and some stayed back in Makkah. Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) and his wife were among those who chose to remain in Makkah. They remained in Makkah since then and migrated to Madinah only after the Prophet (saw) had migrated from Makkah to Madinah.

Sayyidah Ruqaiya (ra) died in 624 CE on the day of the Battle of Badr. Thereafter Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) married the Prophet’s another daughter Sayyidah Umm Kulthum (ra). Since Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) had the distinction of being married to two daughters of the Prophet (saw), he was nicknamed *Dhun-Nurain* (meaning: carrier of two lights).

Respect for Sayyidna ‘Uthman

Quraish were very respectful to Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra). Sayyidna ‘Umar said, “When the Prophet (saw) intended to send me as his envoy to Quraish on the occasion of signing the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, I said to the Prophet, ‘Should I suggest someone who is considered more respectful than me by Quraish? He is ‘Uthman bin ‘Affan.” That is when the Prophet (saw) sent Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) to talk to Abu Sufyan bin Harb (ra) and other leaders of Quraish.

As instructed by the Prophet (saw), Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) met Abu Sufyan and other leaders of Quraish and delivered the Prophet’s message to them. Thereafter they leaders of Quraish said to Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra), “If you wish, you can do *tawaaf* of Baitullah.” Sayyidna ‘Uthman replied, “I will not do *tawaaf* until the Prophet has done it.”

After Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) returned back after delivering the Prophet’s message to Quraish, some Muslims remarked, “You must have availed the opportunity of doing *tawaaf*!” Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) replied, “How did

you presume so about me? By Allah who is in absolute control of my life, had I stayed there for a year while the Prophet (saw) was still waiting in Hudaibiyah, I would not have performed *tawaaf* until the Prophet (saw) would himself have done it.”

While the Prophet (saw) was waiting in Hudaibiyah, he got the news (which proved to be wrong) that Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) had been killed by Quraish in Makkah. He immediately called all of his companions and they all rushed to him. He was sitting under a tree at that time. He took pledge from them that they would not run away from the battle. He then held his own hand and said that it was ‘Uthman’s hand and took the oath on ‘Uthman’s behalf. This is famously known as *Ba’tur Rizwan*.

Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) was held in very high esteem by Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra). When people wanted to approach Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) regarding some issue, they (instead of going directly to Sayyidna ‘Umar) would seek help of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) and ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra). In case they could not succeed via Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) and ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra), they would seek help of Sayyidna ‘Abbas (ra).

Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) was known as *radeef* which stands for someone who sits behind the principal rider on the back of a horse or camel; it signifies that he is next in line of authority after the principal rider.

Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) had provided huge amount of supplies and equipment to Muslims on the occasion of the Expedition of Tabuk and purchased the water well known as *Beir Rome*[6] for the use of Muslims.

‘Abdur Rahman bin Khabbab (ra) narrated:

> I was present when the Prophet was encouraging people for *Jaishul ‘Usrah*[7] (i.e. Tabuk Expedition). ‘Uthman bin

[6] *Beir Rome* was a sweet-water well in the valley of al-‘Aqeeq near the place where flood water used to accumulate; it is now known as Zughaba and lies to the northwest of Madinah. The well had plenty of clean, soft and sweet water and was owned by a Jew. The Prophet (saw) said, “Is there anyone who can buy the well and donate it to Muslims? That person will have special right to benefit from the streams of Paradise.” Sayyidna ‘Uthman bin ‘Affan (ra) negotiated with the owner of the well, bought it for twenty thousand *dirhams* and handed it over to Muslims.

> ‘Affan stood up and said, “O Messenger of Allah, I am giving one hundred camels loaded with their saddles and accessories in the path of Allah.” The Prophet (saw) continued to urge people and ‘Uthman bin ‘Affan got up again and said, “O Messenger of Allah, I am ready to provide two hundred camels with their saddles and accessories in the path of Allah.” As the Prophet carried on his appeal, ‘Uthman bin ‘Affan got up again and said, “O Messenger of Allah, I am giving three hundred camels with their saddles and accessories in the path of Allah.” I observed Allah’s Messenger get down from the pulpit and say, “If ‘Uthman does not do anything after this, it will be enough for him.” (Tirmidhi 2007)

‘Abdur Rahman bin Samurah (ra) narrated:

> As the Prophet (saw) was preparing for *Jaishul ‘Usrah*, ‘Uthman bin ‘Affan came with one thousand *dinars* (god coins) and put them in the Prophet’s lap. I saw the Prophet turn the coins up and down in his lap and say, ‘If ‘Uthman dos not do any good deed after today, it will not harm him. The Prophet repeated this statement once more. (Tirmidhi 2007)

Hakim has reported Abu Hurairah (ra) saying, “’Uthman bought Paradise from the Prophet twice (i.e. got glad tidings of Paradise twice). Once when he had bought the *Beir Rome* and the other time when he provided means for *Jaishul ‘Usrah*.”

Conquests during ‘Uthman’s Caliphate

Muslim conquests had peaked during the caliphate of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra). It was mainly because Islam had dramatically changed the attitude and mindset of Muslims. They had developed great zeal to strive in the path of Allah; they had become eager to taste martyrdom; they longed for Paradise; they disdained worldly pleasure; they had become incredibly brave and fearless; size and might of enemy did not matter to them; and

---

[7] *Jaishul ‘Usrah* means “Difficult expedition.” The expedition of Tabuk is known so because Muslims were extremely short of resources.

they had seen the unseen help of Allah come to their side on numerous occasions. These traits enabled them to sweep through the vast empires of Rome and Persia. There was nothing to stop them from conquering North Africa. Powerful kingdoms and fortified cities were falling like beads of a broken chain.

Perhaps it was the wisdom of Allah and good fortune of Muslims that Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) succeeded Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) as the caliph and the campaigns which had begun during Sayyidna ‘Umar’s caliphate continued and reached completion during Sayyidna ‘Uthman’s period. Most of the governors and army generals like Mu’awiya bin Abi Sufyan, ‘Abdullah bin S’ad bin Abi Sarah, Marwan bin al-Hakam and Walid bin ‘Uqbah who were heading those campaigns during Sayyidna ‘Umar’s caliphate were all Umayyads (clan of Sayyidna ‘Uthman) and were closely related to Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra). Due to those very campaigns, millions of people came into the fold of Islam – a matter of great success in itself.

Azerbaijan, Tabristan (Persia), Asia Minor, Armenia, Marv, Balkh, Khwarezm and the regions between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea were conquered during the caliphate of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra). Later on, Mu’awiya bin Abi Sufyan captured Cyprus and extended the Muslim rule to Tripoli (Libya) and Tangier (Morocco) as well.

During Sayyidna ‘Uthman’s regime, the Islamic caliphate became a maritime power. Its fleet included the ships which were captured from Romans as well as those which were built by Mu’awiya bin Abi Sufyan and ‘Abdullah bin S’ad bin Abi Sarah. The caliphate had grown so vast that a strong navy had become a necessity to defend its borders, especially against the Roman who posed threat at all times.

Islamic forces had already conquered Persia during Sayyidna ‘Umar’s caliphate and Syria also had fallen to them. However those areas had not been fully subjugated and the people living there could be easily instigated against Islam and Muslims. Thus during the caliphate of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra), it was a constant challenge to keep those areas under control and suppress any uprising – a task which was not by any means easier than conquering them for the first time. Despite those difficulties, there were several new regions and countries which were conquered during the regime of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra).

Syed Ameer Ali writes:

> The incursions of the Turks in Transoxiana led to the conquest of Balkh. Similarly, were Herat, Kabul, and Ghazni captured. The risings in Southern Persia led to the subjugation of Kerman and Sistan. In the settlement of the new acquisitions, the policy of Omar was followed. No sooner were these countries conquered, than effective measures were set on foot for the development of their material resources. Watercourses were dug, roads made, fruit trees planted, and security given to trade by the establishment of a regular police organisation. Byzantine inroads from the north led to an advance on the country now called Asia Minor, towards the Black Sea. In Africa, Tripoli and Barca, and in the Mediterranean Cyprus, were conquered. A 31 a. h. large fleet sent by the Romans to re-conquer Egypt was destroyed off Alexandria. (S. A. Ali, A Short History of the Saracenes 1900, 47)

Righteous Caliphate of ‘Uthman

The caliphate of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) was on the same pattern as that of the past two caliphs in all respects – equality, justice, enforcement of the laws of *Shari’ah*, inviting people towards good and forbidding them from evil, and maintenance of law and order.

Tabri relates from Salim bin ‘Abdullah:

> After Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) became the caliph, he performed *hajj* during each year of his caliphate except in the last year. He provided peace and security to people and made public announcement in all the cities that those who had complaints against the government officials should see him at the time of *hajj*; all should act righteously and abstain from evil; no believer should consider himself weak and helpless; and if there was anyone who was oppressed, he (i.e. ‘Uthman) would support him (i.e. the oppressed) against the oppressor. Most people acted accordingly, but some misused those provisions to form their splinter groups.

‘Uthman’s Greatest Achievement

Sayyidna ‘Uthman’s greatest achievement is that he unified the entire Islamic world on a single version of the Holy Quran with respect to the order of its letters, verses and chapters. He prepared multiple copies of the divine scripture and dispatched an official copy to each of the major centers of his caliphate.

Badruddin Muhammad bin ‘Abdullah al-Zarkashi (d. 794 AH) writes:

> People were reciting Quran from memory in whichever way they wanted to recite. As a result, too many variations in the recitation of Quran had evolved and it was feared to become a source of conflict and dispute among people. To combat that problem, a single version of Quran was made obligatory – the version which we are using today
>
> Sayyidna ‘Uthman is commonly known as *Jami’ul Quran*[8] (compiler of Quran), but it is not true. The fact is that he only made it compulsory that Quran be recited only in one way, the way which was agreed upon by *Ansar* and *Muhajirin*. The people of Iraq and Syria had started reciting Quran (its letters and vowels) in different ways and a huge *fitnah*[9] (tumult, confusion) was in offing. The first person who compiled Quran in the form of a book is Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra).
>
> Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) is reported to have said, “May Allah have mercy on Sayyidna Abu Bakr who was the first person to secure Quran between two covers. No *Sahabi* during the periods of Sayyidna Abu Bakr and Sayyidna ‘Umar objected to what Abu Bakr did and since the differences which surfaced during Sayyidna ‘Uthman’s caliphate were not there before, there was no need to formalize it (i.e. the version that Abu Bakr compiled) and make it official. Allah enabled Sayyidna ‘Uthman to render a great service due to which differences

[8] جامع اللرآن
[9] فتنه

> disappeared and the ummah became united with respect to Quran.”
>
> Sayyidna ‘Ali is reported to have also said, “Had I faced the situation which Sayyidna ‘Uthman had faced with respect to Quran, I would have done exactly what he did.”

Ibn Kathir has related in *Al Bidayah wan Nihayah* on the authority of Suwaid bin Ghaflah that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) said:

> O People! Do not be unjust to ‘Uthman. You allege that he made changes to the scripture. By Allah, whatever he did to bring uniformity in the dialect (or recitation) of Quran was known to *Sahabah* and he had their full support in that matter. Had I been in his place, I would have done exactly what he did.

Expansion of the Prophet’s *Masjid*

The expansion of the Prophet’s *masjid* was one of Sayyidna ‘Uthman’s greatest achievements. During the Prophet’s time, the *masjid* had its walls built of unbaked bricks, roof of date tree branches and columns of palm tree trunks. Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) did not add anything to it. Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) extended the building, but still used unbaked bricks and wooden pillars.

Sayyidana ‘Uthman (ra) extended the *masjid* significantly. An arcade of stone and plaster was added and the columns were remolded and built of stone. The roof was made of teak.

Torrent of Turmoil and Difficulties

Conquest of distant lands had brought plenty of wealth. Luxury and comfort had become order of the day. Desert dwellers had for the first time become exposed to lavish and extravagant way of living. It was natural for Muslims to get affected by these things as had been many nations before. Muslims started experiencing unhealthy changes in their thinking, attitude and lifestyle; it was as if they were paying taxes for the huge amount of wealth that was pouring in their coffers from the conquered lands.

When Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) became the caliph, it was the transitional period - the old mode of thinking was phasing out and the new way of thinking was setting in. The Islamic society which the Prophet (saw) had created was based upon simplicity, frugality and hardship; concern for the Life Hereafter was dominant; and lust for worldly pleasure, possession and position was nonexistent. As time passed by, priorities changed and worldly affluence started showing its colors.

From the time Sayyidna ‘Uthman became the caliph, the wind started blowing in the other direction. Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) had anticipated the changes coming but he had tightly constricted them. But waves of conquests and pouring of wealth from all directions affected the society in a profound manner and the life of Muslims changed drastically.

During the caliphate of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra), the Muslim society had become like a fort which was constantly barraged by hurricane winds. Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) did not waver. Nor did he deviate from the right path. He continued fulfilling the obligations of caliphate with full justice and earnestness. But the people whom he was dealing with were not simple minded hardy Arabs and desert dwellers. He was now dealing with people who had seen the outside world and had tasted luxuries of life. It is natural to get affected and influenced by the charm of this world which often makes man blind and insane unless he is equipped with the power of *iman* and fear of Allah.

‘Abbas Mahmud ’Aqqad writes:

> The biggest test for Sayyidna ‘Uthman was that though he did not do anything which conflicted with the practices of his two predecessors (i.e. Abu Bakr and ‘Umar), the environment which he was dealing with was completely different from what was there before.
>
> He had in front of him the examples of his predecessors, his own experiences and the political training that he had received during the best periods of human history. He thus wanted to enforce the rules in the same way as he had seen in the days of the Prophet (saw), Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra), but both the time and people had changed drastically.

The gap between the time Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) had embraced Islam and the one when he became the caliph was as wide as the distance between the earth and the sky. The Arab society had changed in a significant way; the Islamic culture had lost its uniqueness and become a part of the world civilization; it had assimilated itself to the advanced societies of the East and West.

The people who were living in Islamic territories were themselves leading a life that was quite similar to that of the people of non-Islamic countries, but they wanted their governors and administrators not to deviate even slightly from the ways of Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra). That is, the people (during the days of Sayyidna ‘Uthman) themselves were not living like the people of the days of Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra), but they wanted the officers to live by the standards set by Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra).

There cannot be two opinions that Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) was not as strong and authoritative as Sayyidna Abu Bake (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra), but even Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra), in his last days, had fully anticipated that the time had changed and thus used to supplicate: O Allah, I have grown old. I have become weak. My subjects have expanded manifold. Take me away from this world in such a state that I have not failed in fulfilling the right of anyone and I have not been excessive in dealing with anyone.

Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) did understand how the time had changed and used to fear that things might deteriorate further. He used to often warn people and say in his sermons, “The trials which this nation is facing are destined and cannot be escaped. The *fitnah* (tumult) of this worldly life is taking over the hearts of people and its penetration is so deep that no effort can succeed in uprooting it.”

The biggest problem during the tenure of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) was that the office of the caliph lacked the

> loyalty and confidence of people on one hand and the strength and authority on the other hand. A government, which lacks both the confidence of people and authority, cannot escape criticism and dissension and thus cannot survive for long.
>
> Immediately after Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) assumed the office of caliphate, he had to deal with a number of foreign policy issues which had suddenly emerged. The way he had acted in handling those issues deserve to be recognized and appreciated. His actions were timely, moderate and full of wisdom. ('Aqqad 1957)

The very first thing that drew criticism and opposition to Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) was that many of the officers and administrators whom he appointed had neither a sound track record of serving Islam in the past nor a reputable religious standing in the society. Among his appointees, there were some who became involved in objectionable acts and thus became target of criticism, especially of those who had observed the appointees of Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra). The result was that people started grumbling and complaining against them and a pile of misgivings and mistrusts started building up. However, it is also a fact that there may be a valid reason in appointing an individual to certain post and it may not be possible to satisfy everyone in every matter.

In his lectures on Islamic administration, Muhammad Kurd Ali[10] says on the authority of Ibn Jarir al-Tabari:

> Among the administrators and governors of the Prophet (saw), two-third of them were from the clan of Umayyah (the clan of Sayyidna ‘Uthman) because the skill and ability were the most important factors to the Prophet (saw) in selecting officers. The Prophet (saw) did not select those who did not possess administrative ability and were weak. This (i.e. practice of the Prophet) provides a strong evidence that it is the responsibility of the head of state to select personnel to take care of the military, political and administrative duties. Decisions in this matter

[10] Muhammad Kurd ‘Ali (1876-1953) was a Syrian scholar and historian. He was the founder and director of the Academy of the Arabic Language (Damascus).

> should not be based upon age, lineage, kinship, acquaintance, or social and financial status; knowledge, understanding and ability to do the assigned task should be the criteria for being appointed to a job. (M. K. Ali n.d.)

In defense of Sayyidna ‘Uthman’s appointments of officers, Izz al-Din ibn Abi al-Hadid writes in *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*: It cannot be claimed that Sayyidna ‘Uthman knew everything about those whom he appointed as governors and administrators. It is possible that he, at the time of appointing them, knew only what was positive about them and not aware of their shortcomings.

Muhammad Kurd Ali writes: Was it not strategically wise for Sayyidna ‘Uthman to rely upon his clan’s loyalty and allegiance as he was enjoying their full support? Also, it was natural for them (i.e. ‘Uthman’s clan members) in comparison to others to make his caliphate succeed. (M. K. Ali n.d.)

Plenty of arguments can be made on behalf of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) to justify the appointments of governors and administrators in his regime and all of them will be quite valid. But we do not consider him totally unerring and infallible. We rather consider him a *mujtahid*[11] who sometimes makes the right decision and sometimes (unknowingly) makes a faulty decision. No one except Allah is free from all shortcomings and defects and no human is sinless except the prophets of Allah.

We do not consider Marwan bin al-Hakam, Walid bin ‘Uqbah, ‘Abdullah bin S’ad bin Abi Sarah beyond reproach. It is not warranted to deny or justify what they might have done by taking advantage of their close relationship to the caliph (i.e. Sayyidna ‘Uthman) or by dint of their position or authority which was conferred to them. But at the same time, most of those who were critical of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) were also not entirely guiltless and selfless and they had their own personal and political interest in disparaging him and his associates.

Analyzing the undertaking that was mobilized to disparage and discredit Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra), ‘Abbas Mahmud ’Aqqad writes:

[11] مجتهد

> People went too far in criticizing and accusing the caliph (i.e. ‘Uthman). The *ummah* abused the right that Islam has given to express opinions and took undue advantage of it.
>
> Those who actively condemned Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) included some who had their own self-interest in their minds; there were some who were not acting according to what they were preaching; there were some who were convicted for having committed punishable crimes; there was one whose father was imprisoned; there was one who was separated from his wife because he had contracted the marriage illegally; and there were those who did not do any of the above, but had mischief in their hearts. All these factors contributed in fomenting ill feelings towards Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra). ('Aqqad 1957)

Culmination of Mischief

Here we briefly describe the *fitnah* (mischief) which reached its climax and finally led to the siege and killing of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra). Details can be found in Ibn Kathir’s *Al Bidayah wan Nihayah.*

Splinter Group in Egypt

There was a group in Egypt which intensely despised Sayyidna ‘Uthman. It used to bitterly criticize him, vehemently oppose him and spread rumors against him. It alleged that Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) had demoted and sacked eminent *Sahaba*h and appointed undeserving persons to high positions.

‘Abdullah bin S’ad bin Abi Sarah was the person whom the people of Egypt detested most after ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas[12]. After completing the expedition in Egypt, ‘Abdullah bin S’ad bin Abi Sarah had moved on to the missions in Northwest Africa, Berber regions, Spain and other parts of Africa.

In the meantime, a few descendants of *Sahabah*, who were living in Egypt, banded together to fight against ‘Abdullah bin S’ad bin Abi Sarah and started instigating people for the same. Muhammad bin Abu Bakr and

[12] ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas conquered Egypt in 641 CE (20 AH).

Muhammad bin Abu Hudhaifah were in the forefront of that group. The two prepared a battalion of 600 horsemen for the purpose of going to Makkah for ‘Umrah and then stopping in Madinah to demonstrate against Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra). The group was very loyal and respectful to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra).

‘Abdullah bin S’ad bin Abi Sarah came to know of their plan and informed Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) that though they were going for ‘Umarah, their main objective was to stage a public demonstration against him (i.e. Sayyidna ‘Uthman). Thus when they reached the outskirts of Madinah, Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) asked Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) to meet and persuade them to return back to their country without entering Madinah.

It is also reported that when Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) asked volunteers as to who could meet and talk to that group, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) presented himself for the same. Upon that Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) appointed Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and a few other respectable persons of Madinah to go and meet that group.

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and his companions met the group at a place called Juhfa. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) scolded them and made them go back to Egypt without stopping in Madinah. Upon that they started grumbling among themselves and complaining to each other that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was rebuking them although he was the one for whose sake they were going to fight against the *amir* (i.e. Sayyidna ‘Uthman).

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) asked members of that group as to what were their complaints against Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra). When they presented their complaints, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) rebutted their complaints and justified Sayyidna ‘Uthman’s actions. They finally agreed to go back to Egypt without entering Madinah and staging a demonstration against Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra).

Upon return to Madinah, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) gave useful advice to Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) which he welcomed and listened to carefully.

Collusion between People of Egypt, Kufa and Basra

The people of Egypt, Kufa and Basra started corresponding with each other and they forged letters on behalf of eminent *Sahabah* of Madinah. When

the month of *Shawwal* (35 AH) approached, a group of rebellious Egyptians left for Hejaz as pilgrims. Similar groups set out from Kufa and Basra as well.

Those groups converged in Madinah and surrounded and besieged the city. Eminent *Sahabah* approached and rebuked them and asked them to go back to their home countries. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) asked the people of Egypt, “After you had gone back, why did you change your mind and come again?” They said, “We have retrieved a letter[13] from a messenger which has instructions to kill us.” People of Basra and Kufa said the same thing. People of other localities said that they had come to rescue and help their brethren.

Sahabah asked them, “How did you come to know about each other despite the fact that you had parted from each other and you live so far away from each other. Undoubtedly you have colluded among yourselves and have hatched a well-thought plan.”

It is said that when the Egyptians were going back to their country, they had met on the way a person who was also going to Egypt. When they searched him, they found with him a leather bag which contained a letter from Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra); the alleged letter contained instructions to kill a group, hang certain individuals and chop off hands and feet of a few others. The letter bore the seal of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra); the letter carrier was one of the slaves of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) and the camel that he was riding belonged to Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra).

When the Egyptians came back to Madinah, they brought that letter with them and circulated it among people. When Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) was asked about the letter, he said, “This is a conspiracy against me. By Allah, I have neither written it nor dictated it. Nor do I know anything about it. A

[13] It is said that ‘Abdullah bin Saba al-San’aani had played a major role in instigating people against Sayyidna ‘Uthman and in forging letters on his behalf. He was a Jew before embracing Islam. Dr. Jamil ‘Abdullah writes:While Basra and Kufa were faced with severe tumultuous situation, ‘Abdullah bin Saba was working hard in Egypt to create confusion and distrust between the government and public and to infiltrate baseless and fictitious ideas into Islamic ideology. He had for his propaganda targeted major cities which were centers of wealth and Muslim army.

seal can be forged too.” Some were convinced by Sayyidna Uthman’s explanation and some were not.

Ibn Kathir has related in *Al Bidayah wan Nihayah*:

> The letter was a false allegation on Sayyidna ‘Uthman. He had neither ordered it nor did he know about it. Ibn Jarir al-Tabari has stated citing his sources that Egyptians had retrieved from a letter carrier a letter which was addressed to the governor of Egypt and it contained orders to kill some people, hang some and chop off hands and legs of some. This letter was written by Marwan bin al-Hakam on behalf of Sayyidna ‘Uthman and had cited the following Quranic verse to justify his action:
>
> إِنَّمَا جَزَٰٓؤُاْ ٱلَّذِينَ يُحَارِبُونَ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥ وَيَسۡعَوۡنَ فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ فَسَادًا أَن يُقَتَّلُوٓاْ أَوۡ يُصَلَّبُوٓاْ أَوۡ تُقَطَّعَ أَيۡدِيهِمۡ وَأَرۡجُلُهُم مِّنۡ خِلَٰفٍ أَوۡ يُنفَوۡاْ مِنَ ٱلۡأَرۡضِۚ ذَٰلِكَ لَهُمۡ خِزۡيٞ فِي ٱلدُّنۡيَاۖ وَلَهُمۡ فِي ٱلۡأٓخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (٣٣).
>
> Those who fight against Allah and His Messenger and run about trying to spread disorder on the earth, their punishment is that they shall be killed, or be crucified, or their hands and legs be cut off from different sides, or they be kept away from the land (they live in). That is a humiliation for them in this world, and for them there is a great punishment in the Hereafter. [Al-Maedah, 5:33]
>
> The insurgents undoubtedly deserved the punishments which are prescribed in the above verse, but Marwan bin al-Hakam did not have any authority to write such a letter on behalf of Sayyidna ‘Uthman without his permission, inscribe a forged seal on it and utilize his (i.e. ‘Uthman’s) slave and camel to dispatch it.

Some scholars hold the opinion that everything with respect to the letter was done in a planned way with the goal of subverting the authority of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra). This is what Al-Haithami has written in Muwarid al-Dhaman Ila Zawaid ibn Habban:

> Then the Egyptians returned. On their way, a man riding a camel approached them and then went away. He again approached them and went away. The people asked him, “What is the matter? We give you security and protection. Tell us which mission which you are on.” He said, “I have been sent by the *Amirul Momineen* (i.e. Sayyidna ‘Uthman) and I am going to the governor of Egypt.” Then they searched him and found a letter[14] which bore the seal of Sayyidna ‘Uthman and contained instructions to hang such and such persons and cut off hands and feet of such and such persons.
>
> Thereafter they returned back to Madinah, met Sayyidna ‘Ali and told him, “Do you see what the enemy of Allah has written about us? By Allah, we now have the right to shed his blood. Please come along with us.” Sayyidna ‘Ali said, “By Allah, I will not go with you.” They then said, “Why did you then write to us?” Sayyidna ‘Ali said, “By Allah, I did not write any letter to you.” At that, they started staring at each other and one of them said, “Are you fighting for such a person who is so indifferent to you?”

It is also reported that Sayyidna ‘Ali said to them, “O men of Basra, how did you come to know about what happened to the people of Egypt? You had already traveled far distance and then returned to us. By Allah, this plan was already cooked in Madinah.”

Siege and Martyrdom of ‘Uthman and ‘Ali’s Role in that Ordeal

Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) came under fierce attack from insurgents. It was hard to imagine that the caliph of Muslims would be subjected to such a

[14] There is one more evidence to prove that the letter was fake and fabricated. It was alleged that the letter was issued by Sayyidna ‘Uthman and was addressed to ‘Abdullah bin S’ad bin Abi Sarah who was the governor of Egypt at that time. But it was known to both Sayyidna ‘Uthman and Marwan bin al-Hakam that ‘Abdullah bin S’ad bin Abi Sarah was not in Egypt as he was asked to come to Madinah and he had already left Egypt for Madinah.

savage and violent treatment in an era that was not far from the days of the Prophet (saw), Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra). ‘Abbas Mahmud ’Aqqad has remarked: It was one of the many hideous crimes committed by extremely unruly and wicked people for whom nothing was impossible.

The insurgents confined Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) inside the house and surrounded the house from all sides. Senior *Sahabah* did not leave their houses, but their sons such as Hasan, Husain, ‘Abdullah bin Zubair and ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar came to the house of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra), argued with the insurgents on behalf of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) and guarded the entrance of the house to ensure that no one went inside the house.

Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) stopped coming to the *masjid*. The siege had begun at the end of the month of Dhul Qadah[15] (35 AH) and lasted until Friday, the 19th of Dhul Hijjah[16] (17th June 656 CE) when Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) was martyred by the insurgents.

A day before (i.e. on 18th Dhul Hijjah 35 AH), a large number of people, both *Ansar* and *Muhajirin*, numbering about 700, were present at the scene. They included Hasan, Husain, ‘Abdullah bin Zubair, ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar, Abu Hurairah and their slaves. They were sufficient to repel the insurgents if they were given permission to do so, but Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) told them, “To anyone upon whom I have any right, I ask in the name of Allah to restrain his hand and go back home.” Words of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) were so sobering that a few of them said to their slaves, “If you sheathe your sword, you will become free.” It is reported that the last person to leave Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) was Hasan. (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

Ahmad bin Yahya al-Baladhuri (d. 892 CE) has written in *Ansab al-Ashraf* that when insurgents attacked Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) with arrows, Hasan, who was at the door of the house at that time, got drenched with blood and Sayyidna ‘Ali’s slave Qanbar was also wounded.

Abu Muhammad al-Ansari reported: I myself saw Sayyidna ‘Uthman inside the house being defended by Hasan bin ‘Ali. Hasan got injured and I am among those who lifted and carried him away.

---

[15] Dhul Qadah is the 11th month of the Hijri calendar.
[16] Dhul Hijjah is the 12th month of the Hijri calendar.

When Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) sought permission to fight the insurgents and defend Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra), Sayyidna ‘Uthman said, “I ask anyone who believes in Allah, understands His rights over him and I have any right over him, should not shed even a single drop of blood for me.” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) sought the permission again and Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) gave the same reply.

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) then came to the *masjid* and *azan* was called. People asked Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) to lead prayer. Sayyidna ‘Ali said, “While the imam is in prison, I cannot lead the prayer.” He then prayed by himself and went back to his home.

The blockade of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) became more tight and there remained no communication between him and the outside world. He ran out of water. He then asked Muslims for water. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) went on his ride and entered the house with a bag of water with great difficulty. The insurgents scolded him and drove away his ride.

Ahmad bin Yahya al-Baladhuri has written in *Ansab al-Ashraf* that when Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) came to know, he sent three bags of water and several persons of the Banu Hashim and Banu Umayyah clans were injured while trying to deliver thosebags to Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra). Books such as *Nasikh at-Tawarikh* and Al-Fawaid al-Rizwiyah by Sh’iite scholars also quote this incident.

Ibn Jarir al-Tabari has written the following:

> Mu’awiya bin Abi Sufyan said to Sayyidna ‘Uthman, “Before anyone attacks you, come with me to Syria.” Sayyidna ‘Uthman said, “I cannot give up the land of the Prophet even though my neck is shredded into threads.” Mu’awiya said, “I can then send an army from Syria which can protect you in Madinah.” Sayyidna ‘Uthman replied, “Should I make it hard for the neighbors of the Prophet as they will have to share their provisions with an army from outside? Should I become a source of hardship for *Ansar* and *Muhajirin*?” Mu’awiya said, “O *Amirul Momineen*, if you do not listen to me, you may have to lose your life. These cruel people will not spare your life.” Sayyidna ‘Uthman recited: حسبی اله ونعم الوکیل (Allah is sufficient for me and He is the best disposer of affairs). (al-Tabari n.d.)

There was a skirmish between the insurgents and Sayyidna ‘Uthman’s supporters who were inside the house; ‘Abdullah bin Zubair and Hasan bin ‘Ali were wounded in that clash.

The insurgents demanded Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) to relinquish the caliphate. Sayyidna ‘Uthman replied to them, “It is for you to make anyone caliph as you wish. But I will not surrender caliphate. I will not put off the garment with which Allah has clothed me.” (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

What Sayyidna ‘Uthman had said was according to the advice of the Prophet (saw) who had said, “O ‘Uthman, Allah may clothe you with a garment. If people demand you to put off that cloth, do not do so.” (Tirmidhi 2007)

According to Sayyidna ‘Uthman’s wife Nailah bint Al-Furafisah, he was fasting on the day he was martyred. (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

Naf’e relates from ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar that Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) had told people in the morning of the day (Friday 19th Dhul Hijjah 35 AH, 17th June 656 CE) he was martyred that he had seen the Prophet (was) in dream last night; at the time he was assassinated, he had in front of him the Holy Quran which he was reciting.

Some scholars hold the opinion that Jews and Christians were involved in the conspiracy to assassinate Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra). Some hold the view that K’aab bin Ahbaar[17] was also involved in it.

Dr. Jamil ‘Abdullah writes:

> Conspiracies and tumults which the *ummah* faced during the caliphate of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) were plotted by Jews, Christians and other enemies of Islam….After K’aab had prepared ground in Madinah and Syria, ‘Abdullah bin Saba became very active in hatching plans in collusion with other enemies of Islam. He began a concerted scheme to create dissension among Muslims. He sent his agents to Muslim regions and found receptive audience in Basra, Kufa and Egypt.

[17] K’aab bib Ahbaar was a prominent Jewish Rabbi who moved from Yemen to Syria during the time of Sayyidna ‘Umar and converted to Islam.

Hafiz Taqiuddin Subki (d. 756 AH) said: Our belief is that Sayyidna ‘Uthman was a rightful caliph; he was a martyr; Allah saved the *Sahabah* from being involved in shedding his blood; the cursed Satan is responsible for his killing; we do not find any evidence to conclude that any *Sahabi* liked his killing; we instead find evidence to conclude that every *Sahabi* detested his killing.

Character of ‘Uthman and His High Status in Islam

We conclude this chapter of one the most tragic and disgraceful events of Islamic history with the analysis of ‘Abbas Mahmud ’Aqqad. He writes:

It was quite evident that *iman* and *‘aqeedah*[18] was far more deeply rooted in Caliph ‘Uthman than in those who had come from other cities to censure and depose him. Sayyidna ‘Uthman was among those few individuals who had experienced greatest amount of change in their lives after coming into the fold of Islam. Knowing how lavishly he lived in the pre-Islamic days, it is hard to imagine how he changed so much and attained such a high degree of piety and godliness after embracing Islam.

Self-introspection and extreme caution in not harming anyone even if it required risking his own life and that of his close relatives were exemplary traits of Sayyidna ‘Uthman.

When he became certain that he would be assassinated by the insurgents, he made sure that his supporters were not inside the house as he feared that they might be hurt by the insurgents who were surrounding the house and were trying to get inside the house to kill him.

When he was asked to surrender the caliphate, he declined to do so. It was not because he had some wealth which he did not want to part with; all the historians agree that his possession on the day he left this world was much less than what he had when he became

[18] عقیدہ means Islamic belief.

the caliph. He had declined to relinquish the caliphate because he knew that it would open the gates of massive turmoil and massacre. He had said it numerous times before that those who were so eager to get rid of him would later regret and wish that his regime would have lasted for a hundred years.

History has never been bereft of such incidents and it is natural to have differences in opinions. But the real thing to watch is what level of *iman* and steadfastness a person exhibits in upholding his values and ideals in adverse conditions. In the martyrdom of Sayyidna ‘Uthman, we see a glowing demonstration of these traits.

Although the death of Sayyidna ‘Uthman was a great calamity, it was a blessing in disguise like other disastrous events which bring about a change in the lives of individuals and the community at large.

For those Muslims who are still not firm in their *iman*, it was shown that people may not spare even a ruler like Sayyidna ‘Uthman whose dominion extended from the borders of China all the way to the shores of Mediterranean Sea.

We also see how an old man of eighty years risked his own life and did not allow anyone to be harmed for his sake even though he had become absolutely helpless and defenseless and was surrounded by enemies from all sides. It was only the strength of *iman* which had enabled him to act in that manner although he had thousands of followers who could have easily filled streets with blood of enemies who for their part had disallowed even a drop of water to reach him. ('Aqqad 1957)

Chapter 6 - ‘Ali during His Own Caliphate

Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) was martyred in 656 CE (35 AH). Thereafter Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) became the caliph and remained in that position until he was martyred in 661 CE (40 AH). This chapter covers the social and political condition that existed during Sayyidna ‘Ali’s caliphate.

Bay’ah at the Hands of ‘Ali

After the assassination of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra), people of Madinah and the interim administrator Ghafqi bin Harb[1] waited for a few days to see who comes forward to lead the Muslims. Egyptians were insisting on Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) to become the new caliph, but Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was not willing to take it and had hid himself in walled groves.

People did not know what to do and how to resolve the stalemate. They kept on approaching Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) again and again and he finally agreed to take the responsibility of caliphate; everyone in Madinah was in favor of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) becoming the next caliph. It is also a fact that there was no one more qualified than Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) to lead the *ummah* at that delicate moment and fulfill the obligations of caliphate.

A narrator says:

> Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) came to the *masjid*. He was clad in a cotton sheet and a woolen turban. He had his shoes in his hand. Leaning on his bow, he ascended the pulpit. People took *bay’ah* at his hand. It was Friday, the 26th Dhul Hijjah 35 AH (24th June 656 CE). (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

[1] Ghafqi bin Harb was the leader of the rebel group which had come to Madinah from Egypt He was collectively accepted as the leader by the contingents which had come from Egypt, Kufa and Basra.

First Sermon of ‘Ali

It was Friday. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) ascended the pulpit. Those who had not taken *bay’ah* yet, took *bay’ah* with him at that time. There were five more days remaining in the month of Dhul Hijjah. It was Sayyidna ‘Ali’s first sermon after becoming the caliph. After praising the Almighty Allah, he said the following:

> Allah has sent down His Book as the guide which elucidates both good and evil. So do what is good and refrain from what is evil. There are many things which Allah has made sacred and the life of a Muslim is most sacred of all. Allah has tightly secured the rights of Muslims through *tawheed*[2] (oneness of Allah) and *ikhlas*[3] (purity of intention). Muslim is the one from whose hands and tongue all Muslims are safe unless it is decreed by the *Shai’ah* to punish a Muslim. It is not permissible for a Muslim to hurt another Muslim unless it is obligated by *Shari’ah* to do so. Hurry in fulfilling the rights of both the elite and common person. People are in front of you, but *Qiyamah* (Day of Judgment) is approaching you fast from behind. Keep your burden light so that you may reach your destination. The Life Hereafter is waiting for people. Fear Allah in fulfilling the rights of the earth and its inhabitants. You will be questioned on the Day of Judgment about animals and the land as well. I ask you to obey Allah and refrain from His disobedience and wrongdoing. If you see a virtue, adopt it. If you see an evil, discard it.

He then recited the following verse of the Holy Quran:

وَٱذۡكُرُوٓاْ إِذۡ أَنتُمۡ قَلِيلٞ مُّسۡتَضۡعَفُونَ فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ تَخَافُونَ أَن يَتَخَطَّفَكُمُ ٱلنَّاسُ فَـَٔاوَىٰكُمۡ وَأَيَّدَكُم بِنَصۡرِهِۦ وَرَزَقَكُم مِّنَ ٱلطَّيِّبَٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَشۡكُرُونَ (٢٦)

---

[2] توحید
[3] اخلا ص

> Recall when you were few in number, oppressed on the earth, fearing that the people would snatch you away. Then, He gave you shelter and fortified you with His support and provided you with good things, so that you may be grateful. [Al-Anfal, 8:26]

The speech was most timely and appropriate. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had targeted the deadly vice which had become rampant among Muslims; Muslims had lost the sense of sanctity of each other’s life; Muslim blood had become valueless. Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) had become the latest victim of this vice and he was assassinated right in front of all the Muslims in the sacred city of the Prophet (saw), not far from the Prophet’s grave and *masjid*.

It was thus incumbent upon the new caliph to make the sanctity of Muslim’s life (and possession) as the central theme of his sermon. He needed to remind Muslims that they must fear Allah; they must be cognizant of how valuable are His creations; they must honor the rights of the earth and its inhabitants including the speechless animals.

He wisely articulated the principles and guidelines of the new regime. He said, “If you see something which is based on truth and righteousness, embrace it. If see something that is wrong and impermissible by *Shari’ah*, stay away from it.”

The Quranic verse (Al-Anfal, 8:26) which he recited was a reminder to Muslims that they must reflect upon their present condition and compare it to how they were in the past.

There was a time when they were very few in numbers, had no material possession, were uncivilized and culturally backward and had no standing in the world. They were like a piece of meat in a person’s palm which could be easily snatched away by a bird.

Now the same people had become strong and powerful; Allah had blessed them with plenty of everything; they were ruling vast territories of the earth; they were fluttering their flags over both land and sea; they had abundance of wealth; they were enjoying peace and security; and they were recognized by other nations as a world power.

Caliphate of ‘Ali and its challenges

Sayyidna ‘Ali’s ascension to caliphate took place at an extremely trying moment of history. The situation was as volatile and complicated as one could ever imagine. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was faced with great many tests and challenges. The memory of Sayyidna ‘Uthman’s assassination was still very fresh in the minds of people; the assassination was done in such a savage, heartless and brutal manner that it was stirring strong feelings of hate and revenge. Rumors and speculations were overflowing. Everyone was asking others as to what was going to happen next. There was no other topic discussed in any gathering.

In the meantime, the demand for *qisas*[4] (compensation for the life of Sayyidna ‘Uthman) was gaining strength and it was coming from those quarters which had remained absolutely silent during the entire episode. They were people from Egypt and Iraq and Bedouins from the deserts.

It has been often observed in the history of nations that whenever they are inflicted with a dreadful incident, lawlessness thrives, people become bewildered and no issue or cause succeeds in uniting and pulling them together; contrary to that, a war, victory or natural calamity often brings the entire nation together.

Madinah was in the midst of a great turmoil and upheaval. The previous caliph was slain and the new caliph was still in a state of flux and instability. The Islamic society was passing through a state of indecision, uncertainty and vacuum – the condition which made it most vulnerable to attacks and intrusions by shrewd enemies who were keenly waiting for opportune times.

In *al-‘Abqariyat al-Islamiyah*, Mu’awiya bin Abi Sufyan very scholarly discussed the precarious and perplexing situation which the new caliph Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was facing. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was absolutely blameless in the killing of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra); among the senior *Sahabah*, he had exerted more than anyone else in defending Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra); and among the younger generation, his son Sayyidna Hasan (ra) had played the most prominent role in defending the late caliph. Abbas Mahmud ’Aqqad writes:

---

[4] قصاص

The *bay’ah* of Sayyidna ‘Ali took place right after the most horrific and tragic incident of the Islamic history had happened - the assassination of Sayyidna ‘Uthman. Sayyidna ‘Uthman was quite old when he was slain and the situation was such that if the assassins had waited for a few more days, he would have died of thirst anyway.

The most delicate aspect of this tragic incident was that things had become so complicated and gone so out of control that it appeared as if it was decreed to happen anyway and there was no way out of it. Those who were responsible for the killing of Sayyidna ‘Uthman were many and came from diverse groups. There were many groups and each of them was large; if one was calmed, the other turned violent; if one issue was resolved, many others would pop up. Both groups, well-intentioned and spiteful, were equally strong and assertive.

It was unfortunate that many of the things which had precipitated the tragedy were caused by some of the steps that Sayyidna ‘Uthman had taken. It is possible that he might have taken those steps only after due deliberation, but their effect and outcome was not less damaging than that of his enemies.

The challenge which Sayyidna ‘Ali was facing was that he had to strike a balance between two opposing forces. On one hand, he had to hold the reins of his mount so tightly so that it did not go out of control. On the other hand, he had to remove hurdles from the pathway so that the mount could gallop without any obstruction if needed.

The other difficulty was that those who were responsible for Sayyidna ‘Uthman’s assassination could not be identified with certainty. There was not enough evidence to identify the culprits, take them into custody, subject them to legal proceedings and extract *qisas* from them; even the wife of Sayyidna ‘Uthman was unable to identify the assassins with certainty.

The situation was even worse than that. Once when Sayyidna ‘Ali intended to extract *qisas* from the alleged

> assassins of Sayyidna ‘Uthman, an entire army of ten thousand men turned up with lances and declared loudly, “We all are killers of ‘Uthman. Whoever wants to extract *qisas* will have to extract it from all of us.”
>
> Whenever anyone demanded from Sayyidna ‘Ali that he should punish the culprits, he said, “What you know, I am not unaware of that. But tell me how I can deal with those who are more powerful than us and we have no control over them; your slaves have joined them and Bedouins have sided with them. Everything is in front of you. They are doing whatever they like to do. Do you see any hope of bringing them under control and being able to do what you wish to be done?
>
> For those who were demanding *qisas* for the life of Sayyidna ‘Uthman, it would have been better and easier to accomplish their goal if they had supported Caliph ‘Ali to make him capable of enforcing the laws of *Shari’ah* to render justice. ('Aqqad 1957)

Hafiz ibn Hajr al-Asqalani (1372-1449 CE, 773-852 AH) writes in his famous book *al-Isaba fi tamyiz al-Sahaba* (The most comprehensive dictionary of the Companions of the Prophet):

> Sayyidna ‘Ali took the stand that people demanding *qisas* for the life of Sayyidna ‘Uthman must first submit to the head of state and thereafter when the heirs of Sayyidna ‘Uthman would file a claim for *qisas*, the laws of *Shari’ah* would be enforced accordingly. But the opposing group demanded that the offenders must be first identified, captured and killed swiftly. Sayyidna ‘Ali argued that it was not right to extract *qisas* without a claim and supporting evidence. Both the parties were *mujtahid*[5] (competent to interpret law and derive inference).

[5] مجتهد

Start of Dissension and the Battle of *Jamal*

After people had taken *bay’ah* at the hands of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), Talha bin ‘Ubaidullah (ra), Zubair bin Awwam (ra) and other *Sahabah* came to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and demanded him to extract *qisas* for the killing of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) and enforce the pertinent code of *Shari’ah*. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) contended that since the culprits were not just a few in number and they had many supporters and protectors, it was not possible to do it right away. (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

Ibn S’ad al-Baghdadi, after listing names of all the prominent *Sahabah* who had taken *bay’ah* at the hands of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and of those who were present in Madinah, writes the following in *Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*:

> Those two (i.e. Talha bin ‘Ubaidullah and Zubair bin Awwam) went to Makkah where Sayyidah ‘Aisha[6] (ra) was present. They took Sayyidah ‘Aisha (ra) with them, went to Basra and started demanding *qisas* for Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra). When Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) came to know about it, he traveled from Madinah to Iraq leaving behind Sahl bin Hunaif[7] as his substitute; later Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) wrote to Sahl bin Hunaif to come to Iraq and join him and make Abul Hasan al-Mazni as the in-charge of Madinah.
>
> Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) halted at the place known as Dhi Qar[8] and sent ‘Ammar bin Yasir and Sayyidna Hasan (son of Sayyidna ‘Ali) to Kufa[9] with the message for the people of

[6] Sayyidah ‘Aisha had gone to Makkah for *hajj* at the time Sayyidna ‘Uthman was martyred.

[7] Sahl bin Hunaif was an *Ansari Sahabi* from the tribe of *Aus*. He was among the early converts. He had participated in the battles of Badr and Uhad and all other expeditions. According to a report, the Prophet (saw) had established brotherhood between him and Sayyidna ‘Ali. Sayyidna ‘Ali had appointed him as the governor of Syria in place of Mu’awiya bin Sufyan. He had participated in the Battle of Siffin. He died in Kufa in 38 AH and Sayyidna ‘Ali led his funeral prayer. He is the narrator of about forty ahadith.

[8] Dhi Qar is about 800 miles north of Madinah.

[9] Kufa is about 150 miles northwest of Dhi Qar.

> Kufa to come with them to Dhi Qar. After they all came to Dhi Qar, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) took them to Basra[10] and confronted Talha bin ‘Ubaidullah, Zubair bin Awwam, Sayyidah ‘Aisha[11] and their supporters on the day which came to be known as the Day of Jamal[12].
>
> This battle (known as the Battle of the Camel) was fought in the month of *Jumadil Aakhir*[13] 36 AH (November 656 CE). Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) succeeded in the combat. As many as thirteen thousand people were killed[14]. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) stayed in Basra for thirteen days and nights before heading back to Kufa. (Baghdadi n.d.)

When the supporters of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) asked that the booty which came from the battle be distributed among them, he rejected their demand. Saba’iyya (followers of ‘Abdullah ibn Saba) objected to that and said, “How come you are making their blood *halaal* (permissible) and their wealth *haraam* (impermissible)?” When Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) came to know about it, he said, “Who among you would like to have the *Ummul Momineen*[15] (i.e. Sayyidah ‘Aisha) in his share?” That silenced everyone. (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

The battle was not initiated by Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra). He resorted to it only after the other side had started.

Abu J’afar Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Tahawi (853-933 CE, 239-321 AH) has written the following in his famous book *M’aani al-Aathar* on the authority of Ziad bin Wahab:

---

[10] Basra is about 130 miles east of Dhi Qar.

[11] Several historians hold the opinion that Sayyidah ‘Aisha had in fact come to arbitrate, but the tribes of Banu Dhabbah and Banu al-Azad did not listen to her and attacked the forces of Sayyidna ‘Ali.

[12] Jamal (جمل) is an Arabic word which means camel. Since Sayyidah ‘Aisha was riding a camel in this battle, this battle is known as the Battle of Jamal (i.e. the Battle of the Camel). Thus the day on which this battle was fought came to be known as the Day of the Camel.

[13] It is the sixth month of the Hijri calendar.

[14] Ibn Kathir has given the figure of ten thousand in *Al Bidayah wan Nihayah.*

[15] ام المومنين – mother of believers.

> After Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) reached Dhi Qar, he sent ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas (ra) to the people of Kufa, but they were slow in responding to him. But when ‘Ammar bin Yasir (ra) talked to them, they finally came out. Zaid bin Wahab said that he was also one of them who came out (and joined forces of Sayyidna ‘Ali). The narrator said that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) did not initiate the fight against Talha bin ‘Ubaidullah, Zubair bin Awwam and their supporters; when the people of *Jamal* (i.e. opposition) started hostilities, the men of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) fought them back.

‘Ali’s Respect for ‘Aisha, Talha and Zubair

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) treated Sayyidah ‘Aisha with utmost respect and regard. Historians have reported that he sent off Sayyidah ‘Aisha (ra) with a contingent of guards, selected forty respectable women of Basra to accompany her and presented a sum of twelve thousand dirhams as gift; ‘Abdullah bin J’afar (nephew of Sayyidna ‘Ali) considered that amount as small and thus increased it to a much larger amount from his own pocket.

Sayyidah ‘Aisha was not hurt in the battle except that she incurred a minor bruise from an arrow. On the day she left Basra for Makkah, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) came to see her. Sayyidah ‘Aisha (ra) bade farewell to everyone and said, “My children, none of us should complain against other. If there was some misunderstanding between me and ‘Ali, it was nothing more than what normally happens between a woman and her in-laws. Despite my grouses, he is among the noble persons of the *ummah*.” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) responded by saying, “By Allah! *Ummul Monineen* has told the truth. Our differences were nothing more than what she has said. She is the wife of the Prophet in both this world and the Hereafter.”

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) went for miles to see her off. He spent the whole day looking after her needs on the day she departed and it was Monday, 1st Rajab 36 AH (Saturday, 23rd December 656 CE). (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

According an uninterrupted chain of narrators, it is reported that Sayyidah ‘Aisha always used to repent and say, “I wish I had departed from this world before the Day of Camel.” Whenever she remembered that day, she cried so much that her scarf would become wet with tears. (Nadvi 2000)

After the battle was over, Sayyidna ‘Ali inspected dead bodies of the slain soldiers and when he saw the body of someone from Basra whom he knew, he said, “People thought that those who took part in this battle were insane and stupid, but see, he is so and so and he is so and so.”

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) led the funeral prayer of all those who were killed in the battle and ordered them to be buried together.

Talha bin ‘Ubaidullah (ra) was hit by an arrow in the battle[16]. He bled profusely and died in a house in Basra. According to another report, he was killed in the battlefield.

It is also reported that when Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was passing by the dead bodies, he recognized Talha bin ‘Ubaidullah’s body which was drenched in blood. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) stopped, wiped the face of Talha bin ‘Ubaidullah and said, “May Allah have mercy on you! O Abu Muhammad, it is very distressing for me to see you lying in this condition under the open sky. I wish I would have departed from this world twenty years ago!” (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

Zubair bin Awwam (ra), on his way back from the Battle of *Jamal*, had stopped in a valley known as Wadi al-Saba and a person known as ‘Amar bin Jarmuz was following him. ‘Amar bin Jamruz approached Zubair bin Awwam (ra) while he was sleeping and suddenly killed him.

After killing Zubair bin Awwam (ra), ‘Amar bin Jamruz beheaded him and went with his head to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) thinking that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) would appreciate his deed. But when he sought permission to see Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) refused to see him and said, “Give him the glad tiding of *jahannam* (Hellfire).” It is also reported that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) said, “I have heard the Prophet saying that the killer of Ibn Safiyah[17] (i.e. Zubair bin Awwam) will be a dweller of *jahannam*. Give him the news of *jahannam*.”

[16] It is reported that he was hit by Marwan bin Hakam with an arrow.
[17] Safiyah was the mother of Zubair bin Awwam.

Shift of Capital to Kufa

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) shifted the capital of caliphate from Madinah to Kufa[18]. The reader may wonder why Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) shifted the capital from Madinah which had been the capital from the days of the Prophet (saw) until the martyrdom of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra).

It appears that he wanted to keep Madinah – the city which he loved, the city which the Prophet (saw) had migrated to and the city where the Prophet (saw) was buried – away from internal strife and military confrontations. In-house fighting had already started and all the signs were foretelling that they would only intensify in coming days. Given the sanctity of the Prophet’s mosque which is next only to the Grand Mosque of Makkah in status and that of the Prophet’s burial place, Madinah must not be allowed to become the epicenter of turmoil and upheaval.

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was right in his assessment. All that was feared did indeed happen. Only a few years later during the reign of Yazid[19] bin Mu’awiya, the incident of Harrah[20] took place which severely damaged the morale of Muslims and trampled the sanctity of the city of Madinah and its residents.

However, ‘Abbas Mahmud ’Aqqad has given a different reason of why Sayyidna ‘Ali chose Kufa as the capital; he has argued that Kufa was the most appropriate place for being the capital due to geographical, administrative and cultural reasons. He writes:

> Sayyidna ‘Ali made Kufa the headquarters of the Islamic caliphate and it was a necessary and appropriate decision. The Islamic regime had expanded significantly and it needed a central place where people from different parts of its territory could easily come together and it was on the trade routes of India, Persia, Yemen, Iraq and Syria. Kufa

[18] Kufa is in Iraq. It was founded by S’ad bin Abi Waqqas after the Battle of Qadisiyyah in 636 CE. Many prominent scholars of hadith and fiqh were born in this city. It was the capital of Abbasid caliphs before they shifted to Baghdad.

[19] Yazid bin Mu’awiya was the second Umayyad caliph

[20] Harrah is a place northeast of Madinah. A battle was fought here by ‘Abdullah bin Zubair and his allies against the army of Yazid bin Mu’awiya in 683 CE (63 AH).

> was also a cultural center where poetry, language, literature, calligraphy, storytelling and genealogy were thriving. Thus Kufa possessed all the qualifications for becoming the seat of caliphate. ('Aqqad 1957)

Differences among *Sahabah*

It is important that the differences which existed among *Sahabah* must be studied and examined in an objective manner and with a cool mind. It is true that some of the differences among them became so serious that they led to battles, but we must be careful not to pass a quick verdict against them, condemn them, suspect their motive or blame them for being greedy of power and wealth. We must fully understand the conditions which prevailed at that time, complexity of the situation and mindset of the people before reaching any conclusion.

It is our everyday experience that we err in understanding and evaluating even those incidents which have happened only recently; we often fail to look at all aspects of an incident as a result of which we reach a faulty conclusion. Then what to say about the events which took place many centuries ago and in an environment which was far different from what we can imagine today.

We must understand the dynamics of that society. We must know the norms, customs and expectation of that culture. Without taking into consideration all these factors, it will be difficult to reach an impartial and just conclusion. For example, it is not easy to discern who was at fault in the Battle of *Jamal*. One group was adamant upon extracting *qisas* for the life of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra), whereas the group was finding it difficult to fulfill that demand. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), who represented the latter group, was placed in that predicament and had to bear the brunt of ensuing discord and hostilities.

Abu Bakr has related the following from Abul Bukhtari:

> Sayyidna ‘Ali was asked about those who had fought against him in the Battle of *Jamal*, “Were they *mushrik* (polytheist)?” Sayyidna ‘Ali replied, “They had left behind *shirk* (polytheism).” He was then asked, “Were then they *munafiq* (hypocrite)?” He replied, “A m*unafiq* remembers Allah very little.” He was then asked, “Then what were

> they?” He replied, “They were my brothers, but they had rebelled against me.” He further said, “I pray to Allah that they and we, all of us, become among those about whom Allah has said in the Holy Quran:
>
> وَنَزَعۡنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِم مِّنۡ غِلٍّ إِخۡوَٰنًا عَلَىٰ سُرُرٖ مُّتَقَٰبِلِينَ
>
> We shall have removed whatever grudge they had in their hearts, (thus making them) brothers, sitting on couches, face to face [Al-Hijr, 15:47].

There are many narrations that those who had taken part in the Battle of *Jamal* had recanted their earlier stand and had expressed regret for their role in that battle. As has been mentioned earlier, Sayyidah ‘Aisha (ra) used to openly regret about her role in that battle.

Shah Waliyullah Dehlavi, in his book *Izalat al-Khafa 'an Khilafat al-Khulfa* (Removal of Ambiguity about the Caliphate of the Caliphs), has reported Al-Hakim to have narrated the following from Thaur bin Mujzat:

> I saw Talha bin ‘Ubaidullah (ra) at the time of the Battle of *Jamal* and he was breathing his last. I asked him, “Which group do you belong to?” Talha bin ‘Ubaidullah (ra) replied, “I am among the people of ‘Ali. Give me your hand. I want to do *bay’ah* at your hand.” I gave my hand to him. He took *bay’ah* at my hand and passed away immediately thereafter. I went to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and described the whole incident to him. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) said, “What the Prophet had said proved right. Allah did not like Talha to enter Paradise without my *bay’ah*.”

Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 CE, 732-808 AH), the great historian, sociologist and philosopher, has rendered a very scholarly and balanced analysis of the Battle of *Jamal* in his famous work *The Muqaddimah* (known as *Prolegomena* in Greek). He writes:

> One should beware of letting one's mind or tongue become used to criticizing any of (the ancient Muslims). One's heart should not be tempted by doubts concerning anything that happened in connection with them. One should be as truthful as possible in their behalf. They

> deserve it most. They never differed among themselves except for good reasons. They never killed or were killed except in a holy war, or in helping to make some truth victorious. It should further be believed that their differences were a source of divine mercy for later Muslims so that every (later Muslim) can take as his model the old Muslim of his choice and make him his imam, guide, and leader. If this is understood, God's wise plans with regard to His creation and creatures will become clear.
>
> That (killing of ‘Uthman) opened the door to the (ensuing) trouble. All the (persons involved in the affair of 'Uthman) can be excused in connection with the occurrence. All of them were concerned with Islam and were not neglectful with regard to any aspect connected with the Muslim religion. After the event, they considered the matter and applied their independent judgment. God observes their circumstances. He knows these men. We can only think the best of them. What we know about their conditions, as well as the statements of the Speaker of the Truth (Muhammad praising those men), require us to do so
>
> Even though 'Ali was in the right, Mu’awiya's intentions were not bad ones. He wanted the truth, but he missed (it). Each was right in so far as his intentions were concerned. Now, the nature of royal authority requires that one person claim all the glory for himself and appropriate it to himself. It was not for Mu’awiya to deny (the natural requirement of royal authority) to himself and his people. (Royal authority) was a natural thing that group feeling, by its very nature, brought in its train. (Ibn Khaldun 1967)

The example of the Battle of *Jamal* is like that of water which came to boil and then cooled down. But the conflict between Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Mu’awiya bin Abi Sufyan was of a very different nature; it was a clash between two principles and two powerful armies. We now briefly present this painful and long story with a heavy heart.

Conflict between ‘Ali and Mu’awiya

The year 36 AH started only a few days after Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had become the caliph and had appointed new governors for different regions. For Syria, he had replaced Mu’awiya bin Abi Sufyan ra) by Sahl bin Hunaif (ra).

Sahl (ra) left Madinah for Syria. When he reached Tabuk, the horsemen of Mu’awiya (ra) met him there and asked him, “Who are you?” He said, “Governor.” They asked him, “For which region?” He said, “For Syria.” They said, “If you have been sent by ‘Uthman, we welcome you. Otherwise, go back.” Sahl (ra) said to them, “Are you not aware of what has happened?” They said, “We know everything.” Thereafter Sahl (ra) returned back to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) in Madinah. .

Mu’awiya (ra) sent an emissary to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) with a long letter. The person came to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) who asked him, “What have you come for?” He said, “I am coming from people who are demanding *qisas* and they are all full of vengeance. I have left behind seventy thousand elderly people who are sobbing under the shirt (besmeared with blood) of ‘Uthman and that shirt has been placed on the pulpit of (the *masjid* of) Damascus.” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) said, “O Allah, You know that I have no hand in the killing of ‘Uthman.”

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) decided to fight the people of Syria. He gave a speech and prepared people for the same. He appointed Qasam bin ‘Abbas as the in-charge of Madinah and made firm determination to fight those who were opposing him.

Sayyidna ‘Ali’s son Hasan came to him and said, “O my father, give up the intention of undertaking this fight as it will result into loss of great many Muslim livesand it will create a wide rift between them.” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) did not accept Hasan’s suggestion and remained firm in his intention to fight the people of Syria. He prepared and organized the army[21]. He was

[21] Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had taken that stand to preserve the authority and prestige of the office of the calip. This was exactly the stand of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra) when he had refused to step down as the caliph. If a caliph surrenders the office under unreasonable demand of some factions and shirks the trust and responsibility that people have put on him, the office of caliph would simply become a tool in the hands of insurgents and rebels.

almost ready to embark upon that campaign, but the situation in Basra forced him to change his plan, divert his attention from Syria to Basra and undertake the fight which came to be known as the Battle of *Jamal*. (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

After the Battle of *Jamal* ended, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) left Basra and reached Kufa on 12th Rajab 36 AH (3rd January 657 CE). He was suggested to stay in the White Palace[22], but he refused to do so saying that Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) had disliked staying there. He instead camped in an open ground, prayed two *rak’ah* (units of prayer) in the main *masjid* of the city, addressed people and advised them to do good deeds and stay from evil deeds. Thereafter he sent a letter to Mu’awiya (ra) through Jarir bin ‘Abdullah. The letter appears in *Nahj al-Balaghah* (The Path of Eloquence) as follows:

> Those who had taken *bay’ah* with Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthman have also taken *bay’ah* with me. And they have taken *bay’ah* with me on the same matters upon which they had taken *bay’ah* with Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthman. Thus those who are present her have no choice except to do the same and those who are not present here have no right to reject it. The right of *shura*[23] (consultation) lies only with the *Ansar* and *Muhajirin*; if they agree on someone to be their *imam*[24] (leader), it certainly carries the pleasure of Allah. If someone disagrees with this consensus or rejects it as a *bid’ah*[25] (innovation), he will be returned to where he came from. If he opposes it, he will be fought with for abandoning the path of common Muslims and then Allah will deal with him. (al-Radi n.d.)

The Battle of Siffin

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) left Kufa for Syria with his army. When Mu’awiya (ra) came to know about it, he gathered his forces, organized them in units and

[22] It was a palace built by Persian Emperors.
[23] شوریٰ
[24] امام
[25] بدعة

appointed unit heads. After Mu’awiya’s forces got fully prepared, they marched towards Siffin[26] on the banks of the Euphrates River as it was along the route of Sayyidna ‘Ali’s forces.

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) dispatched a vanguard under the command of Ushtar Nakha’i with strict instructions not to initiate the fight; fight only when attacked by the enemy; persuade the opposite camp to do *bay’ah* (to Sayyidna ‘Ali); do not wage an attack even if they refuse to do *bay’ah*; do not go near the enemy, but also do not stay away so far that it may appear that you are frightened; and remain organized, calm and patient. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) also said to Ushtar Nakha’i, “Wait for me until I reach there and I will be reaching there soon if Allah wills.”

After reaching the battlefield, Ushtar Nakha’i did what Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had instructed him to do. The commander of Mu’awiya’s forces was in front of him and both armies were facing each other. When the evening set in, the Syrian forces retreated to their camps. On the next day, both forces came to the battle field again and faced each other, but nothing happened except some minor skirmishes; like the first day, they retreated to their camps in the evening. In the meantime, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had also reached the battlefield.

On the third day, fighting took place between the forces of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Mu’awiya (ra) on a larger scale. Syrian forces (i.e. Mu’awiya’s men) had captured the water wells and were denying Iraqis (i.e. Sayyidna ‘Ali’s men) access to them. However it was later agreed that the water wells would remain accessible to both the forces.

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) sent some of his men to go to Mu’awiya (ra), ask him to take *bay’ah* (to Sayyidna ‘Ali) and watch what Mu’awiya’s response was. On the other hand, Mu’awiya (ra) had become more determined in demanding *qisas* for the life of Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra).

Thus the fighting continued between the two forces off and on for more than one hundred days; on some days, they would battle with each other twice. The month of Dhul Hijjah (36 AH) had ended and the month of Muharram (37 AH) had begun and there was no end in sight.

[26]Siffin is a place on the banks of the Euphrates River. It is close to the present-day Ar-Raqqah (Syria).

There was a desire on both sides to end the fighting and stop the bloodshed of Muslims. Envoys kept on shuttling between Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Mu’awiya (ra). The entire month of Muharram (37 AH) passed by, but no agreement could be reached.

Mu’awiya (ra) and ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas[27] (ra) finally decided to fight it out. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) also prepared his army for the same; he instructed his men not to initiate the fight; not to kill anyone who got injured; not to capture someone who was fleeing; not to dishonor any woman even though she might be cursing or insulting the noble and pious people.

Intense fighting resumed and continued for two days without any party conceding defeat. On the third day, the fighting became more intense and continued right until *‘isha* time. Same situation continued for the next four or five days until it was Friday and no one could claim victory.

People of Syria had pledged to Sayyidna Mu’awiya (ra) that they would give their lives fighting for him. The people of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had the same resolve. Ushtar Nakha’i launched a fierce attack on the contingent which was surrounding Sayyidna Mu’awiya (ra). Syrians launched a counterattack and the balance kept on shifting from one side to the other.

‘Ammar bin Yasir got killed at the hands of Syrians. This according to Ibn Kathir makes it clear that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was on the right side of the conflict[28].

The battle continued until Friday morning. The *fajr* prayer was performed in the state of *khauf* (fear). As the day progressed, the forces of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) started gaining ground and it appeared as if they would emerge victorious and the forces of Sayyidna Mu’awiya (ra) would be defeated.

---

[27] ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas (ra) was on the side of Mu’awiya (ra).

[28] According to Ibn Hajr al-Asqalani, a hadith has been reported on the authority of a continuous chain of narrators that ‘Ammar bin Yasir (ra) would be killed by a rebel group and all the historians agree that he was fighting on behalf of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) in the battle of Siffin. Ibn Taymiyyah said, “It is proven by the Book, *sunnah* and majority opinion of the scholars of earlier times that they all were *momin* and Muslim. However those who were with ‘Ali bin Talib were more right than those who fought against them.”

While the battle was still in progress, the Syrian army raised the Holy Quran aloft their lances and said, “This Book will decide fate of the battle. People are perishing. Who will defend the Islamic state? Who will do *jihad*? Who will fight infidels and polytheists?”[29] Iraqis (i.e. forces of Sayyidna ‘Ali) said, “We accept the Book of Allah and we turn to it.”

Mus’yir bin Fidki of the tribe of Tamim, Zaid bin Husain of the tribe of Tayy (alias al-Sabai) and a number of others including some *qurra* (reciters of the Holy Quran) got together and said, “O Ali, when you are called towards the Book of Allah, you should accept it. If you do not do so, we will hand you over to the enemy. Or, we will do to you what we did to ‘Uthman bin ‘Affan.” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) said to them, “Remember that I am forbidding you and also remember what you are saying. If you accept what I am saying, continue fighting. However if you have decided to disobey, do whatever you want to do.” Ushtar Nakha’i also advised them and argued with them, but they did not listen to him either.

Most of the Iraqis and Syrians agreed to stop fighting and reach some sort of agreement. After prolonged diplomacy and negotiations, they agreed on *tahkeem* (arbitration) - Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Sayyidna Mu’awiya (ra) would each appoint a representative who would mutually decide what was best for Muslims. Sayyidna Mu’awiya (ra) appointed ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas as his representative. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) wanted to appoint ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas (ra) as his representative, but due to the insistence of *qurras*, he appointed Abu Musa al-Ash’ari (ra) as his representative.

Tahkeem

Abu Musa al-Ash’ari (ra) was hasty by nature. When the envoys went to him and told him that people had agreed to peace, he said, “All praise is due to Allah!” He was then told that he had been appointed as an arbitrator. Upon that he said: إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّآ إِلَيْهِ رَٰجِعُونَ (We certainly belong to Allah and to Him we are bound to return[30]).

---

[29] Al-Tabari and other historians have written that ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas was the person who had conceived that proposal.

[30] This is a verse of the Holy Quran. People usually read it when inflicted with a grief or loss.

Abu Musa al-Ash’ari (ra) was then brought to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra). The two arbitrators prepared a document and got it signed by Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Sayyidna Mu’awiya (ra) according to which the decision of the arbitrators would be binding on both the parties and would be acceptable to all the Muslims. The document also guaranteed safety of the lives and possessions of the two arbitrators. (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

Emergence of Khawarij (Kharijites)

When the agreement was read by Ash’ath bin Qais to the people of Banu Tamim, ‘Urwah bin Uzina stood up and said, “Do you appoint humans to decide matters relating to the religion of Allah?” The statement of ‘Urwah was seized upon by a number of *qurra* groups among the supporters of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and they started shouting: لاحکم الا للہ (Orders come from none but Allah). This was the beginning of the sect which later came to be known as Khawarij[31] and that very statement became the article of their faith.

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) left Siffin for Kufa. Before he reached the city of Kufa, about 12,000 men broke away from his army and camped in a place called Harura. They were Khawarij; Khawarij are also known as Haruri because of their association with the place known as Harura.

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) sent ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas (ra) to them. Due to his persuasion, many of them changed their mind, but a sizeable number of them remained adamant in their position. They agreed among themselves that they would continue commanding people to do good deeds and refrain from evil deeds. They expressed their disagreement and displeasure with Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) very openly about appointing arbitrators in matters of religion as they believed that it was the absolute domain of Allah.

Ibn Jarir al-Tabari writes: One day when Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was delivering a sermon, a kharji stood up and said, “O ‘Ali, you have introduced the opinions of people in the religion of Allah although orders come only from Allah. Upon that, many of those who were present started shouting: Orders come from none but Allah. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) responded by saying, “What

[31] خوارج means dissenters, dissidents, rebels, etc.

you are saying is true, but your understanding and intentions are misplaced.” After that incident, they left Kufa and settled in Nahrawan[32].

In explaining the response of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) to the call (لاحكم الا لله) of Khawarij, Abu-al-Faraj Ibn Al-Jawzi, (1114-1200 CE, 508-597 AH) has written the following in his famous book *Talbees Iblis*:

> What they were saying was true, but they were associating wrong meaning to it. It is true that orders come from Allah only, but they were using it as لاإمارة إلا لله (No one has be followed except Allah). There has to be an *amir* (leader), righteous or not, so that believers may live an orderly life; non-believers may receive their benefits; there is a procedure and timetable for everything; the treasury may be managed and overseen; believers may defend themselves against enemies; law and order may be maintained and transportation routes are made safe and secure; weaker sections of the society may get their rights; rebels and defiant ones may be reigned and disciplined.

The two arbitrators (Abu Musa al-Ash’ari and ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas) met in Dumatul Jundal and it was the month of Ramadan 37 AH (February 658 CE). After looking at the prevailing conditions and considering the benefits of Muslims, they decided that both Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Sayyidna Mu’awiya (ra) be discharged and it should be left up to Muslims to select whoever they like as the caliph. It is reported that ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas (ra) first tried to convince Abu Musa al-Ash’ari (ra) to accept Sayyidna Mu’awiya (ra) as the caliph, but Abu Musa al-Ash’ari (ra) did not agree to it; thereafter they agreed to let Muslims choose their caliph.

The two arbitrators then appeared before the public. ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas (ra) told Abu Musa al-Ash’ari (ra), “Please get up and announce the decision which we have agreed upon.” Abu Musa al-Ash’ari (ra) stood up, praised Allah, sent peace and blessings on the Prophet (saw) and said, “We gave due consideration to the affairs of Muslims and found that nothing will be more helpful in restoring peace and harmony among people than to depose both ‘Ali and Mu’awiya and hand over this matter to a *shura* (consultative body) which will deliberate and decide who the caliph will be. I thus

[32] Was a city a few miles from present-day Baghdad.

hereby depose both ‘Ali and Mu’awiya.” Abu Musa al-Ash’ari (ra) then stepped aside and ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas (ra) stood in his place.

‘Amr bin al-‘Aas (ra), after praising Allah, said, “You heard whatever ‘Abu Musa has said. As he has deposed his claimant (i.e. ‘Ali), I also depose him (i.e. ‘Ali) and I appoint my claimant Mu’awiya (as the caliph) as he is a relative of ‘Uthman bin ‘Affan, is demanding *qisas* on his behalf and is most entitled to succeed him (i.e. ‘Uthman bin ‘Affan).” Abu Musa al-Ash’ari (ra) then talked to ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas (ra) in a harsh manner and ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas (ra) retorted in the same way. It is reported that Abu Musa al-Ash’ari (ra) felt so shy of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) that he went straight to Makkah from there. (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

However Abu Bakr ibn al-Arabi (1076-1148 CE, 468-543 AH) has refuted this incident in his book *Al-'Awasim Min al-Qawasim* (Defense against Disaster). Abu Bakr writes: Reliable reports establish that Abu Musa and ‘Amr simply agreed to depose ‘Ali and Mu’awiya and left the issue of electing the next caliph to the elderly Companions of the Prophet (saw).

On the other hand, Khawarij gained more strength and became more vicious and brutal in disowning and condemning Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra); they went to the extent of declaring him a *kafir*[33] (infidel); one of the Khawarij leaders said, “O ‘Ali, if you do not stop appointing people to arbitrate in matters related to the Book of Allah, we will wage war against you and will consider that war to be a means of pleasure and nearness to Allah.”

Khawarij got together in the house of ‘Abdullah bin Wahab al-Rasibi who delivered a long speech and admonished the attendees to practice asceticism, aspire for the Life Hereafter and Paradise and command good and forbid evil. He also implored them to take out their brethren from the locality which was occupied by oppressors and take shelter in a valley or go to in Madain[34]. Thereafter they abandoned everything including their relatives and headed towards Madain; they believed that it was an act pleasing to Allah. (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

---

[33] كافر

[34] Madain was an ancient metropolis which lay between the royal centers of Ctesiphon and Seleucia on the banks of the Tigris River.

‘Ali’s Acceptance of Tahkeem and Reaction of Khawarij

Before we look at the extreme views and beliefs of Khawarij, it may be helpful to look at the position of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra0 and the precarious condition that he was faced with. ‘Abbas Mahmud ’Aqqad writes:

> In my view, those who had criticized Sayyidna ‘Ali for accepting tahkeem would have also criticized him with same speed and intensity if he had opted not to accept it. There were also those who were blaming him that he did not accept tahkeem wholeheartedly; he accepted it only when he had no other choice; he had accepted it when his own army was refusing to fight and there was a real danger that the army would split into two groups (on accepting tahkeem and one rejecting tahkeem) and they would start fighting each other.
>
> Those historians who approve Sayyidna ‘Ali’s acceptance of tahkeem and disapprove the appointment of Abu Musa al-Ash’ari (whose weakness and indecisiveness was known) as his representative tend to forget that Abu Musa’s appointment was imposed on Sayyidna ‘Ali in the same way as tahkeem was imposed on him in a hurry.
>
> An even more important fact that is usually overlooked is that whether it was ‘Ali’s trusted deputy Ushtar Nakha’i or his cousin ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas, ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas would have never agreed to depose Mu’awiya and accept ‘Ali as the caliph and the final result would have been same; both the arbitrators would have remained stuck to their respective positions and the outcome would not have been any different from what was reached.
>
> Thus those who study history with a critical mind will reach the conclusion that there was nothing better than what Sayyidna ‘Ali did regardless of whether it was a strategic mistake or he did so because he knew that the final outcome would be the same in every case. ('Aqqad 1957)

Khawarij and Saba’iyya

It is necessary here to describe Khawarij (Kharjites) and Saba’iyya (Sabaites) – the two sects which gave extremely hard time to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra). Only Allah knows the wisdom behind it. Maybe, it was a way of brightening the qualities and abilities with which Allah had blessed Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra).

Khawarij

By temperament, Khawarij were extremely rigid, negativistic, contemptuous and cynical. These traits were so pervasive in their lives that it is hard to find any group of people either in ancient times or after the coming of Islam which could match them.

They were a part of Sayyidna ‘Ali’s army and most of them belonged to the tribe of Tamim. They had revolted against Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) because they objected to appointing any human in the presence of the Book of Allah to decide any matter. It had become their belief that tahkeem was a sin because the orders of Allah were clear in all matters and that tahkeem implied that the stand of one of the rival factions was doubtful.

The adage لاحکم الا للہ (Allah alone has the right to decide) spread among them like a wild fire and fully captivated them. It became their slogan and hallmark. They also came to be known as الشراۃ (*al-shurrah*) which meant that they had sold their lives to Allah; this term was derived from the Quranic verse وَمِنَ ٱلنَّاسِ مَن يَشۡرِي نَفۡسَهُ ٱبۡتِغَآءَ مَرۡضَاتِ ٱللَّهِ (And among men there is one who sells his very soul to seek the pleasure of Allah; Al-Baqara, 2:207).

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) fought them in Nahrawan. He defeated them and killed many of them, but they did not vanish. Those who survived became more rigid and staunch in their belief. Their disdain for Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) further intensified and they became determined to kill him. ‘Abdur Rahman bin Muljam who assassinated Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was a kharji.

Khawarij, because of having a large number of Bedouins in their fold, possessed many of the tribal traits, both good and bad. They easily clashed with their leaders; they were extremely susceptible to tribal grouping; they were very intolerant and narrow-minded in dealing with their opposition.

On the other hand, they were very brave; they were extremely frank and straightforward; there was no duplicity or cunningness in their character. They were so scrupulous that they would not pick up even a piece of date without the permission of its owner.

It was a very simple matter for them to die for their belief and conviction. They also did not feel any hesitation in killing a Muslim or anyone who did not subscribe to their doctrine. ‘Abdur Rahman bin Muljam assassinated Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and continued reciting Quran thereafter. When it was said to him that his tongue would be severed, he became panicked. Upon being asked what made him panic, he said, “I do not want to live like a dead person in this world (because of not being able to recite Quran after losing tongue).”

Abu Hamza, a close acquaintance of Khawarij, describes them as:

> They are those individuals who look old in their young age. They keep their gaze down when confronted with something impermissible. They are very reluctant to approach something which is evil. They are lean because of excessive worship of their Lord. They are pale and feeble because of remaining awake in the night.

Saba’iyya

‘Abbas Mahmud ’Aqqad writes:

> Saba’iyya (Sabaites) are the followers of ‘Abdullah bin Saba who was also known as Ibn Sauda (son of a black woman). He was originally from Yemen and he was known to be a Jew. His mother was from Abyssinia. His religion[35] was actually a combination of beliefs from different religions; from Judaism – a savior will be born in the progeny of Prophet Dawud; from Hinduism – God reincarnates Himself in human form; from Christianity – Prophet Isa will come to the world again; from Persians – descendants of kings and nobles are sacred in their lineage. ('Aqqad 1957)

[35] Was known as مذهب رجعت which means the Religion of Return.

‘Abbas Mahmud ’Aqqad further writes:

> The creed of Saba’iyya was born in Yemen and its followers ruled that country in the past. This sect went to extremes in exhibiting its love and devotion for Sayyidna ‘Ali and even ascribed divinity to him. It served as the breeding ground for the Shi’a sects Fatimid and Imamite which later emerged in Egypt and Iran.

Mohammed bin Amralkachi, in his book *Rijal Kashi* (Biography of Men), writes the following about ‘Abdullah bin Saba:

> He is the first person to declare that it was obligatory to accept the imamate of ‘Ali and to disown his adversaries. He openly declared his enmity towards ‘Ali’s opponents and declared them *kafir* (infidels). This is the core argument which opponents of Shi’asm use to support their claim that the main source of Shi’asm is Judaism.

‘Abdullah bin Saba and his followers, in fantasizing Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), went to the extent of exalting him first as a prophet and then as a divine being. They also started preaching their creed to others including the people of Kufa. When Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) came to know about this, he ordered them to be burnt in two pits of fire, but later changed his mind and expelled them to Madain.

When the tragic event of the assassination of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) took place, ‘Abdullah bin Saba said that ‘Ali could not be killed and that he had only ascended to the sky like Prophet Isa. Some of his followers believed that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was concealed in clouds and the clap of thunder was his voice; that is why when they heard a roar of thunder, they responded by saying, “*Assalamo Alaike, Ya Amirul Momineen*!”

When ‘Abdullah bin Saba was informed about the assassination of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), he said, “Even if you bring his brain in a bag and show it to me, I will not believe in his death. He cannot die until he has come back from the sky and has established his rule over the entire world.”

There has been perhaps no conspiratorial movement in history which has succeeded and thrived as much as that of ‘Abdullah bin Saba.

There were many factors which played important role in shaping the mindset and character of ‘Abdullah bin Saba and his followers. The psychological and religious elements in his personality are very obvious. In his followers, secrecy and covertness was more pervasive than clarity and transparency; hardship and toughness was more prevalent than ease and comfort. This is how the Holy Quran has described the nation of Saba: فَقَالُواْ رَبَّنَا بَـٰعِدۡ بَيۡنَ أَسۡفَارِنَا (But they said: "Our Lord, place longer distances between our journey; Saba, 34:19). This was the hereditary temperament of ‘Abdullah bin Saba.

‘Abdullah bin Saba came from a Jewish background. Throughout the history, Jewish people have been known for their destructive and detrimental attitude; for introducing unhealthy and immoral thought in literature and culture; for stirring rebellious thinking among people; and for creating disorder and confusion in the society. All these traits are commonly found in adherents of the Jewish faith.

This mentality and historical legacy took shape in the form of a movement under the leadership of ‘Abdullah bin Saba. All the elements such as anarchism, extremism and overzealousness and excessiveness in venerating someone were at the very core of that movement.

It is unfortunate that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) became the primary victim of that movement. His close relationship to the Prophet (saw), his gifted talents and extraordinary genius were fully exploited and used as a vehicle to advance interests of the movement.

Ahmad Amin (1886-1954), a renowned historian from Egypt, writes in his famous book *Fajr al-Islam*:

> In human history, we find examples of nations which were ruling large parts of the world, but as time passed by, they became arrogant and proud and started believing that they were the only ones worthy of ruling the world. The result was that such nations were replaced by others which were driven by a set of concrete beliefs and principles.
>
> Those who have studied history minutely will vouch that when an ousted nation becomes too impotent to fight back and regain its lost glory and power, it usually indulges in acts of destruction, violence and lawlessness and employs

> its energy and talent in planning conspiracies, fomenting anarchism and instigating disorder.
>
> Taqi al-Din Ahmad al-Maqrizi (1364-1442 CE), a reputed Egyptian historian, writes:
>
> It is worthwhile to know the reason why those who went out of Islam did so. Persians were ruling large empires and their dominance over others was well established; they assumed themselves to be masters and deemed others to be slaves. When Islam deposed them, they felt awfully humiliated as they had never given any credence to Arabs – an added reason for feeling disgraced and embarrassed. That is why they (after their defeat) remained constantly engaged in undermining Islam and in planning conspiracies against it, but Allah always blessed Islam and Muslims with victory.
>
> At last they thought of a different strategy – creating confusion among Muslims and dividing them. On one hand, they (i.e. Persians) convinced the fellow Muslims of their country that they were true Muslims. On the other hand, they convinced Shi’as that they were right in revering and venerating the family members of the Prophet (saw) and incited them to hate those who were depriving the household of the Prophet of their rights. That is how they misled people from the right path. (Amin 1928)

The emergence of two opposing sects was in fact the fulfillment of the Prophet’s prophecy. Ahmad bin Hanbal has recorded the following hadith in *Musnad Ahmad*:

> ‘Ali bin Talib said: The Messenger of Allah called me and said, “You are like Isa; the Jews hated him so much that they made false accusations against his mother and the Christians loved him so much that they raised him to a status that was not appropriate for him.” Two types of people will be doomed because of me: the one who loves me, praises me and exaggerates about me; and the one who hates me and the hatred for me makes him tell lies against me. Verily, I am not a prophet and I do not receive revelation; rather I act in accordance with the Book of

> Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet as much as I can. When I command you to obey Allah, it becomes your duty to obey me whether you like it or not. (Hanbal 2012)

Example for *Ummah* in the Life of ‘Ali

The All-Knowing Allah knew that the *ummah* which He has trusted with the responsibility of leading mankind in all aspects of human life will be facing different conditions at different times; sometimes, there will an atmosphere of obedience and faithfulness and sometimes, the condition will be rife with disobedience and insubordination; sometimes, it will face attacks from outside and sometimes, it will have to deal with internal strife.

This is the nature of human life – conditions do not remain same and they keep on changing. That is why Allah has given guidance for different occasions and provided examples in the form of illustrious personalities so that there is a practical model for the *ummah* to follow in every situation and the *ummah* is not left to wander in darkness.

There were situations in which Muslims had to fight infidels, idol worshippers, Peoples of the Book and apostates. But as distasteful as it might be, it was also natural to expect that Muslims in future would fight among themselves, revolt against their own leaders and challenge their authority. Thus an example from the people of the earliest period of Islam was needed to show how the Muslims of coming generations should conduct themselves in such situations.

Sufyan bin ‘Uyaynah (725-814 CE, 107-198 AH), a renowned *taba’i*[36], has described this reality as follows:

> Allah had given four types of swords to His Prophet (saw). The first type was used by the Prophet (saw) himself against the idol worshippers; the second type was used by Abu Bakr to fight the tribes who had renegaded, as the Holy Quran mentions: ثُقَٰتَلُونَهُمۡ أَوۡ يُسۡلِمُونَ (Fight them until they submit - Al-Fath, 48:16); the third type was used by ‘Umar to subdue Magians and People of the Book, as the Holy Quran mentions: قَٰتِلُواْ ٱلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤۡمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ (Fight those

[36] تابعی someone who had seen and met a Companion of the Prophet.

> who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, from among the People of the Book, until they pay *jizyah* with willing submission and feel themselves subdued - Al-Tawba, 9:29); the fourth type was used by ‘Ali to fight those who broke away from the mainstream, refused to do *bay’ah* and exceeded the limits of Allah, as the Holy Quran mentions: فَقَٰتِلُواْ ٱلَّتِى تَبۡغِى حَتَّىٰ تَفِىٓءَ إِلَىٰٓ أَمۡرِ ٱللَّهِۚ (Fight the one who commits aggression until he comes back to Allah’s command – Al-Hujraat, 49:9).

Abu Hanifa (699-767 CE, 80-150 AH) is reported to have said: ’Ali was justified in every combat that he fought against anyone. Had he not done what he did, no one could have known what Muslims were supposed to do when differences arise among them.

Chapter 7 - ‘Ali’s Encounter with Khawarij and Syrians

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) faced enormous difficulties from Khawarij and Syrians throughout his caliphate. Khawarij vehemently opposed him and finally assassinated him. Even the Iraqis, who professed to love and revere him profusely, provided very little support to him in his fight against Syrians. This chapter sheds light on these aspects of Sayyidna ‘Ali’s life. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was known for extraordinary skills of oration and articulation. This chapter sheds light on this facet of his life as well.

People of Iraq and Syria

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was faced with two great difficulties at the same time. On one hand, he had to deal with Syrians who were becoming more determined in their opposition to him and a fight against them seemed quite inevitable. On the other hand, he had to deal with his supporters and followers who were divided and lacked zeal and enthusiasm which were needed to counter the Syrians. Syrians and Iraqis had very different history, culture and temperament and those differences had played a major role in making the conflict between Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Sayyidna Mu’awiya (ra) so huge; ‘Ali’s supporters were mainly Iraqis and Mu’awiya’s supporters were mainly Syrians.

Political Stability in Syria

Umayya, the great-grandfather of Sayyidna Mu’awiya (ra), had migrated from Makkah to Syria on account of some conflict with his brother Hashim (the great-grandfather of ‘Ali) and lived there for a long period of time. Umayya’s grandson Abu Sufyan (father of Mu’awiya) was appointed as the person in-charge of providing security to the trade caravans which used to travel between Makkah, Syria and Yemen. Due to that responsibility, Abu Sufyan frequently traveled to Syria and thus developed close ties with the tribal leaders and people of Syria.

Abu Sufyan’s acquaintance with Syria and its people was the main reason why the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius, upon receiving the letter of

invitation from the Prophet (saw), had summoned Abu Sufyan to know more about Islam and the Prophet (saw). That incident and the conversation that took place between Heraclius and Abu Sufyan are described in detail in *Sahih Bukhari* and other books of *hadith* and *seerah*.

Yazid bin Abi Sufyan (elder brother of Sayyidna Mu’awiya) and Sayyidna Mu’awiya had been governors of Syria for many years; Yazid bin Abi Sufyan was appointed as the governor of Syria by Caliph ‘Umar (ra) in 639 CE and after Yazid’s death, Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) appointed Sayyidna Mu’awiya in his place; at the time of Sayyidna ‘Uthman’s assassination, Sayyidna Mu’awiya had governed without any difficulty for almost two decades.

Before Syria was conquered by Muslims in 634 CE, it was a part of the Byzantine Empire and there had always been law and order there. Sayyidna Mu’awiya (ra) was well known for his administrative skills and leadership qualities among his compatriots. He combined the qualities of elegance, generosity and graciousness. He was politically very astute. He knew how to control his subjects and keep them satisfied as well.

Political Instability in Iraq

Iraq on the other hand had been a vassal state of Persia’s Sassanid and Kiyani rulers for several centuries. Sustained political stability and peace was rare in that region; rulers kept on changing frequently; many emperors came to throne in a short period of time. Chosroes I Anooshiravan (531-579 CE) was replaced by his son Hormizd IV (579-590 CE) who was in turn replaced by Chosroes II Aparvez (590-628 CE). Chosroes II Aparvez after suffering defeat at the hands of Heraclius was deposed and killed by Cyrus and Sirves.

Persia remained engulfed in acute turmoil for four years from 628 to 632 until Yazdgird III[1] was made the emperor. During that period, as many as ten emperors came to throne including the daughter of Hormizd although it was against the Persian tradition to have a female emperor.

[1] Yazdgird III ascended the throne in 632 CE when he was only eight years old. He was the grandson of Chosroes II Aparvez.

Influence of Victor Arab Tribes

In shaping the behavior and mindset of the people of Syria and Iraq, the factors such as which Arab tribes had conquered them and settled in their countries had also played an important role. The tribes which had conquered Syria came mainly from the northern and western parts of the Arabian Peninsula where the people were used to living a disciplined and orderly life. Contrary to that, those who had conquered Iraq came primarily from the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula whose residents were rough, uncivilized and stubborn; those who had refused to pay *zakah* after the death of the Prophet (saw) came from this very region.

Ahmad Amin writes:

> Since ancient times, Iraq has served as the home to new creeds and religions. The doctrines of Mani, Mazdak and Ibn Daisan were once very popular there. Judaism and Christianity had their foothold there. People of that land were exposed to many different types of faith including the one in which it was believed that God embodies certain humans. (Amin 1928)

Ahmad Hasan al-Zayyat (1885-1968 CE) writes in *Tarikh al-Adab al-‘Arabi*:

> The Arabs who came to Iraq brought with them their Yemeni and Nazari prejudices. The regions adjoining Euphrates were populated with either Christians or Khawarij who belonged to the tribe of Rabi’a which, according to Asma’i was the source of every tumult. (al-Zayyat 2004)

In describing the differences that existed between the forces of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and Sayyidna Mu’awiya (ra), ‘Abbas Mahmud ’Aqqad further writes:

> It is a strange historical fact that the two armies (Iraqis and Syrians) were so opposite to each other in their attitude and character. While one was extremely particular about maintaining and strengthening order, discipline and

> organization, the other was equally averse to these things and was bent on creating chaos and mayhem.
>
> The first type which was fond of discipline and organization came to the lot of Sayyidna Mu’awiya (ra) in the form of people from Syria and its vicinity. The second type which despised discipline and organization came to the lot of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) in the form of people from very diverse tribal, ethnic and geographical backgrounds. ('Aqqad 1957)

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) wanted to attack Syria, but Khawarij refused to go along with him. He led a large army from Kufa to Nakhilah where he, in an inspiring speech, urged his men to fight valiantly and remain patient. But before he could proceed to Syria, he came to know that Khawarij (in Nahrawan) had created a mayhem, started looting and killing and damaged transportation routes.

When Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) sent one of his men to talk to them (i.e. Khawarij), they did not even let him talk and killed him. When Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) came to know about it, he deemed it necessary to rein them first before confronting Syrians. He then went to them and admonished them saying, “You have disobeyed me in a matter (i.e. tahkeem) which you yourself were advocating in the past. When I advised you against it, you did not listen to me.”

But Khawarij, instead of listening to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), arrayed against him and started shouting: Orders come only from Allah; hasten towards Paradise. Thereafter some of them brandished their swords and lances to fight against Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and his men. Upon that the men of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) attacked and crushingly defeated them. This incident took place at Nahrawan in 37[2] AH.

Departure towards Syria and Excuses of Iraqis

When Sayyidan ‘Ali (ra) returned from Nahrawan after tackling Khawarij, he assembled his people and delivered a sermon to them. After praising

[2] According to some historians, that incident took place in 38 AH.

Allah and invoking peace and blessing on the Prophet (saw) He said, “Allah has blessed you with a victory. Now you should tackle Syrians without any delay.” In reply to this call, Iraqis stood up and said, “O *Amirul Momineen*, we have run out of arrows, our swords have become dull and our lances have lost their spikes. Please take us back to our homes so that we can replenish our weapons and regain our strength.” (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

This had always been the attitude of Iraqis. Ibn Jarir al-Tabari writes: When Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) found Iraqis to be so cold and unresponsive and reluctant to go to war, he addressed them, chided them, warned them of dire consequences and recited Quranic verses pertaining to *jihad* to inspire them; but Iraqis did not move and continued sneaking out to their respective towns; Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had to at last return back to Kufa.

It was now 39 AH. Sayyidna Mu’awiya (ra) assembled a large army and spread his men in many areas which were still under the control of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra). Sayyidna Mu’awiya (ra) was aware that Iraqis were undisciplined and they were defying orders of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra). Mu’awiya’s forces attacked the towns of ‘Ain-al-Tamar, Al-Anbar, Tama and Tadmur; those attacks exposed the weakness and timidity of the forces of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and demoralized them further.

When Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) came to know that the forces of Sayyidna Mu’awiya (ra) had attacked Al-Anbar and killed its governor Hassan bin Hassan, he became very saddened and furious. He then came out of his house, went to Nakhilah and ascended a hilltop to address his people. After praising Allah and invoking peace and blessing on the Prophet (saw), he delivered a historic sermon; it was an expression of grief by a leader who was deeply hurt by indifferent attitude of his own followers; it was an expression of his conviction in the rightness of his stand; it was a masterpiece address exhibiting the mastery of oration and articulation which he was known for. He said:

> *Jihad* is a door to Paradise. He who evades this door, Allah will disgrace him and humiliation will become his destiny. O people, I have been telling you day and night, openly and secretly, to fight them. I exhorted you to attack them before they attack you. I swear by Allah in whose control is my life that those who are attacked in their own homes are always the ones who suffer disgrace. But you kept on putting it off and paid no heed to my advice. You

remained sitting indolently until the time came when a series of attacks were mounted against you.

People of the tribe of Ghamid attacked Al-Anbar and killed its governor Hassan bin Hassan. They killed many men and women. A soldier enters a house and removes ornaments from the person of a Muslim or *dhimmi* woman and walks away without any resistance or a scratch. If a Muslim who has any sense of dignity dies out of grief upon sighting such an appalling scene, he, instead of being condemned, should be praised.

It is awfully strange, depressing and heartbreaking to see them so united despite being wrong and see you so dispirited despite being on the right path. Arrows are shot at you, but you do not hit back; you are attacked and you do not counterattack; Allah’s commands are openly disobeyed and it does not bother you.

If I ask you to attack them in winter, you come up with the excuse that it is too cold. If I ask you to attack them in summer, you say that it is too hot and ask for relief until summer goes away. By Allah, if you run away from heat and cold, the fear of sword will make you run even faster.

O men who have only appearance of man and do not possess qualities of man. O men who are only imagination and shadow of man. O men who only possess the mind and wit of a woman. By Allah, your (i.e. ‘Ali’s comrades’) disobedience has made my entire plan and strategy futile and you have filled me with anger and grief. We have now reached a point where Quraish are saying to me, “The son of Abu Talib is brave, but does not know the tact of war.” How strange it is! Who knows more than me about war and fighting? Allah is my witness. I stepped into war before I was twenty and today I have exceeded the age of sixty. But he whose orders are not obeyed can do nothing even though he may be very wise and tactful[3].

[3] Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) repeated this sentence thrice.

Martyrdom of ‘Ali

Ibn Kathir has written in *Al Bidayah wan Nihayah*:

> The conditions had become so deplorable that the *Amirul Momineen* (i.e. Sayyidna ‘Ali) had become very disgusted. His forces had become defiant and had stopped cooperating with him. The people of Iraq also had started opposing him. On the other hand, Syrians were gaining strength and were launching attacks everywhere with loot and plunder.
>
> Out of all the humans who were living on the earth at that time, the *amir* of Iraq, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), was the best of all; he worshipped Allah most; he was most selfless; he was farthest away from the love and greed of this world; he was most knowledgeable; and he was most god-fearing. Yet, people abandoned him and left him helpless so much so that he seemed to have become fed up with his own life and wished for death. Pointing to his beard, he used to say, “You will be colored with blood” and that is what ultimately happened. (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

Details of the Tragic Event

Three Khawarij namely ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Amr (also known as Ibn Muljam), Burak bin ‘Abdullah al-Tamimi and ‘Amr bin Bakr al-Tamimi got together, talked about their comrades who were killed by the forces of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) in Nahrawan and supplicated for their forgiveness.

They then said to each other: We may have to lose our lives, but if we kill the leaders of misguided people, we will free the country from them and also avenge the killing of our brothers. Ibn Muljam said, “I take the responsibility of killing ‘Ali.” Burak bin ‘Abdullah said, “I take the responsibility of killing Mu’awiya.” ‘Amr bin Bakr said, “I will take care of ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas.”

They vowed not to break their promises and to kill the assigned person or be killed in executing that task. They also decided that each of them would

be spending the night of 17th Ramadan[4] (40 AH) in the city where his target was living. Thereafter they took their swords, laced them with poison and started preparing for executing their plan.

Ibn Muljam went to Kufa. He did not mention his plan even to his Khawarij friends. In the night of 17th Ramadan, he hid himself behind the door through which Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) used to come out for prayers. In early morning, Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) came out for *fajr* and while he was waking people up for prayer, Ibn Muljam struck him on his head with his weapon. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) started bleeding profusely and his beard became red with blood. At the time Ibn Muljam attacked Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), he (i.e. Ibn Muljam) was shouting: Power belongs to Allah alone; ‘Ali, neither to you nor to your companions.

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) called for help. Ibn Muljam was captured. Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was brought home and J’adeh bin Hubairah bin Abi Wahb led the *fajr* prayer.

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) said, “In case I die, kill him. If I survive, I know what to do with him.” When Ibn Muljam was brought in front of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) said, “Keep him in prison and treat him well. If I survive, I will think about what to do with him. I may forgive him. Or, I may ask for *qisas*. If I die, compensation for a life is just one life. Also, do not mutilate him.” (Ibn Kathir n.d.)

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra), at the end of a long sermon to his sons Hasan and Husain, said, “O sons of ‘Abdul Muttalib, do not shed blood of Muslims for no reason. You may say that *Amirul Momineen* has been killed. But be mindful that no one expect my assassin may be killed. If I die of his assault, inflict only one stroke on him. Do not mutilate his body as I have heard from the Prophet saying, ‘Beware! Never mutilate a living being after killing it even if it is barking dog.”

Jundab bin ‘Abdullah (ra) said, “O *Amirul Momineen*, after you have left this world, should we do *bay’ah* at the hand of Hasan?” Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) replied, “I neither command you do that. Nor do I forbid you from that.”

It is said that the last words which Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) uttered before leaving this world were the following Quranic verses:

[4] 17th Ramadan 40 AH corresponds to 23rd January 661 CE.

فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ (7)وَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ (8)

Anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, he will see it. And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, he will see it. [Al-Zalzala, 98:7-8]

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) advised his sons, Hasan and Husain, to fear Allah and to do good deeds; he included these advices in the will as well.

Ibn Muljam said, “I struck such a blow on him (i.e. Sayyidna ‘Ali) that it would have been sufficient to kill every resident of the city. By Allah, I had treated my sword with poison for one complete month. I had bought it for one thousand *dirham* and had spent the same amount on poising it.”

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) was martyred on Friday. It was the seventeenth day of Ramadan (40 AH). He was sixty-three years old at the time of his death. His caliphate lasted for four years and nine months.

His funeral prayer was led by his son Sayyidna Hasan (ra). He was buried in Darul Imarah of Kufa because it was feared that Khawarij might remove his body from the grave.

Family of Sayyidna ‘Ali

Ibn Jarir al-Tabari has reported that Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had fourteen sons and seventeen daughters. Abu ‘Abdullah Muhammad al-Waqidi (748-822 CE, 130-207 AH) has reported that Sayyidna ‘Ali’s progeny continued through five children, namely, Hasan, Husain, Muhammad bin al-Hanfiyah, ‘Abbas and ‘Umar.

From Sayyidah Fatima

Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) had two sons (Hasan and Husain) and two daughters (Zainab al-Kubra and Umm Kulthum) from his first wife Sayyidah Fatima (ra), the daughter if the Prophet (saw). Umm Kulthum was married to Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra). It is also reported that he had a third son (Mohsin), but he had died at a very early age.

From other Wives

From Umm al-Banin bint Hazam: ‘Abbas, J’afar, ‘Abdullah and ‘Uthman.

From Laila bint Mas’ud: ‘Ubaidullah and Abu Bakr.

From Asma bint ‘Umays: Muhammad Asghar and Yahya.

From Sahba bint Rabi’ah: ‘Umar and Ruqaiya.

From Umama bint Abi al-‘Aas (daughter of Prophet’s daughter Zainab): Muhammad Ausat.

From Khawla bint J’afar: Muhammad al-Akbar who became famous by the name of Muhammad bin al-Hanfiyah.

From Sa’id bint ‘Urwah: Ummul Hasan, Milat al-kubra and Umm Kulthum.

Muhammad bin al-Hanfiyah

His real name was Muhammad al-Akbar, but he became famous by the name Muhammad bin al-Hanfiyah. He was a renowned scholar of Quran and Sunnah, an eminent statesman, a brave warrior and an eloquent speaker. He acknowledged Sayyidna Abu Bakr (ra) and Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) as the best among the Companions of the Prophet (saw). He used to praise Sayyidna ‘Uthman (ra). He died in Taif in 81 Ah at the age of sixty-five.

Shams al-Din ibn Khallikan (1211-1282 CE, 608-681 AH), in his book *Wafayat al-a’yan wa-anba abna az-zama*n (Deaths of Eminent Men and History of the Sons of the Epoch), writes:

> Muhammad bin al-Hanfiyah was an eminent pious scholar of great standing. He was physically strong as well. He was seen carrying the flag of his father Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) in the Battle of *Jamal*. He was born two years before Sayyidna ‘Umar (ra) became the caliph and died in 81 AH (700 CE) at the age of sixty-five. He was buried in the Jannat al-Baqi cemetery of Madinah.

There were born many eminent scholars, *sufiya* (mystics), reformers and warriors in his progeny. His descendants are living in different parts of the Indian Subcontinent and their names appear in various

biographical treatises. His descendants are commonly known as ‘Alvi.

‘Ali’s Wisdom and Eloquence

Before we present samples of Sayyidna ‘Ali’s words of wisdom and speeches of eloquence and show that it is difficult to find their parallels in any language, it is worthwhile to look at what eminent scholars such as Ahmad Hasan al-Zayyat and ‘Abbas Mahmud ’Aqqad say about him.

Ahmad Hasan al-Zayyat writes in *Tarikh al-Adab al-‘Arabi*:

> Either in the generations that immediately succeeded the Prophet (saw) or in those which came later, we did not find anyone who was as eloquent as Sayyidna ‘Ali. We did not find anyone who could match his oratory skills and command of language and dictum. He was a *hakeem*[5] (wise person) from whom fountains of wisdom were springing out. He was a *khateeb*[6] (orator) whose eloquence used to captivate the audience. He was a *wa’iz*[7] (preacher) whose sermons used to penetrate into hearts and minds of people. His arguments were profound and overpowering. He had so much control over his words and speech that he could articulate anything in the way he desired. All agree that he was undisputedly the best among Muslim orators and men of letters. (al-Zayyat 2004)

‘Abbas Mahmud ’Aqqad write:

> The discourses and dialogues of Sayyidna ‘Ali are so elegant in style and substance that nothing in that genre can be better than them. They are studded with beautiful maxims and paragons and it becomes difficult to discern which is the best and most powerful of them. The listener becomes dumbfounded and cannot decide what to appreciate – meaning, style or language. ('Aqqad 1957)

---

[5] حكيم
[6] خطيب
[7] واعظ

The most distinctive feature of Sayyidna ‘Ali’s aphorisms, maxims, advices and similes is that they are very simple and clear. They are based upon rational thinking and minute observations. They amply demonstrate Sayyidna ‘Ali’s deep understanding of human nature, nuances of life and history of mankind.

Nahj al-Balaghah

Nahj al-Balaghah (The Path of Eloquence) was compiled by Sayyid Sharif al-Radi (970-1015 CE, 359-404 AH). It is a collection of sermons, letters and short sayings of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra). Commenting on *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Ahmad Hasan al-Zayyat writes:

> Some hold the view that a good portion of *Nahj al-Balaghah* was written by Sayyid Sharif al-Radi himself as it contains caviling and derogatory remarks about *Sahabah* (Companions of the Prophet) which are unbecoming of them; it delves into such topics of philosophy, ethics and sociology which were creations of later generations and did not exist in the days of Sayyidna ‘Ali; it describes things and events in a very minute, complex and painstaking way which was not the temperament of the people of those days. Nevertheless, most of what is contained in this compilation belongs to Sayyidna ‘Ali. (al-Zayyat 2004)

Sharh (Commentaries) of *Nahj al-Balaghah*

More than fifty *sharh*[8] (commentaries) of *Nahj al-Balaghah* have been written. Most prominent among them are authored by Abu Bakr al-Bayhaqi (994-1066 CE, 384-458 AH), Fakhr ad-Din ar-Razi (1149-1209 CE, 543-604 AH) and Izz al-Din ibn Abi al-Hadid (1191-1258 CE, 587-656 AH). The one by al-Hadid is most comprehensive and has been published in twenty volumes by various publishers. Among the later scholars, Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905 CE) has written a commentary on it and has drawn the attention of literary circles towards its study. As a result, interest in studying *Nahj al-Balaghah* has grown significantly in recent years.

[8] شرح

Sample Sayings

For a literary critic who is familiar with the style and mode of expression that was prevalent in the days of Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and with the exceptional skills and abilities with which Allah had blessed, it will be quite easy to distinguish between his genuine expressions and the ones which are ingeniously attributed to him.

Out of those expressions of Sayyidna ‘Ali which are deemed authentic and have been often quoted in reputable literary works such as al-Mubarrad’s *Al Kamil*, Ibn ‘Abdur Rabbah’s *Al ‘Aqdal Farid* and Jahiz’s *Al Bayan Wat Tabyeen*, here are a few samples:

1. The worth of a person is determined by what he can do best.
2. Talk to people in a way that is appropriate to their mental capacity and level of understanding. Do you want them to reject Allah and His Prophet because of their lack of understanding?
3. A noble person loses control when he is hungry and a lowly person loses control when he is full.
4. Give rest to hearts and provide humor to them. They also get tired and bored like bodies.
5. *Nafs*[9] (internal craving and yearning) likes to go after desires. It likes ease and comfort. It detests hardship. It runs towards pleasure and amusement. It gets attracted towards evil which keeps on inciting it. If restrained, it becomes weak and subdued. Otherwise, it leads to destruction.
6. Beware! You must not hope anything from anyone except from Allah. You must not fear anything except your misdeeds. Do not feel shy in learning what you do not know. If you are asked about something which you do not know, just say that you do not know.
7. Poverty dulls intelligence. A poor person becomes a stranger in his own home.
8. Ineptness is a curse, perseverance is bravery, *zuhd*[10] (abstinence from worldly pleasure) is a treasure, and fear of Allah is a shield.
9. Morality and manners are like attires which are always worn (i.e. maintained) as new[11]. A man’s thinking is like a clear and spotless mirror.

---

[9] نفس
[10] زهد

10. When a person is riding high, virtues of others are also attributed to him. If he is down in a pit, even his own merits are denied.
11. If a person hides something in his heart, he shows it up in his words and look of his face.
12. Do not become a slave of someone when Allah has created you free.
13. Save yourself from relying on false hope as they are the assets of foolish.
14. Should I tell you who the greatest scholar is? It is he who does not present to people an evil as a virtue, does not make people unafraid of the wrath of Allah and does not make people despair of the mercy of Allah.
15. People are fast asleep. They will wake up when they will die.
16. People become enemy of what (or whom) they do not know.
17. People are closer to their own times (in habits, manners, etc.) than to that of their ancestors.
18. A person is hidden behind his tongue. That is, his reality does not come to light until he speaks.
19. For he who has recognized himself, there is no danger or deception.
20. Sometimes a single word that a person utters deprives him of all the blessings.

Poetic Compositions

There is a well-known collection of poems which are attributed to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) and are often quoted by writers. But critics doubt the authenticity of a good portion of it and some of the compositions do not meet the expectation of Sayyidna ‘Ali’s caliber.

Yakut ibn ‘Abdullah al-Rumi al-Hamawi (1179-1229 CE, 574-626 AH) has written in *Mu’jam al-Udaba*: I (i.e Yakut) have read the handwritten statement of Abu Mansur Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Azhari al-Lughawi (895-980 CE, 282-370 AH) in *Kitab al Tahdhib* that Abu ‘Uthman al-Mazni said that we it was not established that Sayyidna ‘Ali ever composed any verse except the following two:

[11] They must never be forsaken and discarded as old clothes.

> The people of Quraish long to kill me, but it will never happen.
> They can neither fulfill their vow nor succeed.
> If ever killed, XXXXXXXX NEED TO COMPLETE IT

Though Ibn Hisham has cited a number of verses attributed to Sayyidna ‘Ali (ra) in *As-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah*, he has expressed doubt about their authenticity.

Uniqueness of his Style

Before concluding this painful chapter, it appears fitting to present a few samples of Sayyidna ‘Ali’s speeches and utterances; though they are expressions of his deep anguish and grief, they also demonstrate his superior skill of articulation due to which they have found unique place in the annals of literature. He was deeply hurt by the harsh treatment that he received at the hands of the people of Iraq. On the other hand, those who claimed to be his supporters also became a source of great disappointment to him; they appeared to be very enthusiastic in expressing their love and devotion for him, but their actions were quite contrary to their claim.

Here are a few samples:

> How long shall I accord you consideration that is accorded to camels with hollow hump or to worn-out clothes which when stitched on one side get torn on the other side. Whenever a vanguard force of Syria hovers over you, every one of you shuts his door and hides himself like a lizard in its hole or a badger it its den.
>
> By Allah, he whom people like you support must suffer disgrace and he who throws arrows with your support is as if he throws arrows that are broken both at head and tail.
>
> Within the courtyard, you are quite numerous but under the banner you are only a few. Certainly, I know what can improve you and how your crookedness can be straightened. But I shall not improve your condition by ruining myself. Allah may disgrace your faces and destroy you. You do not understand the right as you understand the wrong and do not crush the wrong as you crush the right. (Nahjul Balagha Part 1, The Sermons n.d., 69)

> Now then, O people[1] of Iraq! You are like the pregnant woman who, on completion of the period of pregnancy delivers a dead child and her husband is also dead and her period of widowhood is long while only remote relation inherits her. (Nahjul Balagha Part 1, The Sermons n.d., 71)

> By Allah in Whose power my life lies, these people (Mu`awiyah and his men) will overcome you not because they are on truth more than you but only because they are more steadfast in their wrong and you are slow and reluctant in supporting me.
>
> People are afraid of the oppression of their rulers while I fear the oppression of my subjects. I called you for war but you did not come. I warned you but you did not listen. I called you secretly as well as openly, but you did not respond. I gave you sincere counsel, but you did not accept it. You appear to be present, but you are absent. You are a slave, but have become a lord. I recite before you points of wisdom but you turn away from them. I advise you with far reaching advice but you disperse away from it. I rouse you for jihad against the people of revolt but before I come to the end of my speech, I see you disperse like the sons of Saba. You return to your places and deceive one another by your counsel. I straighten you in the morning but you return to me in the evening as curved as the back of a bow. The straightener has become weary while those to be straightened have become incorrigible.
>
> O those whose bodies are present but their minds are absent, their wishes are varied and their rulers are afflicted by them. Your leader obeys Allah but you disobey him while the leader of the people of Syria disobeys Allah but they obey him. By Allah, if Mu`awiyah transacts like a money-changer who gives a *dirham* for a *dinar*, I will agree with him if he takes ten from among you and gives me one from them. (Nahjul Balagha Part 1, The Sermons n.d., 97)

These people are divided over truth. They have lost the courage to fight. Their body is intact, but their desires are dispersed. They are witnessing the orders of Allah being broken all over, but they remain unmoved. Though they are exalted people of Arabia, honored and esteemed and in large numbers, but of no avail because their hearts can hardly unite on any matter. (al-Radi n.d.)

I wanted my cure from you but you proved to be my disease, like the one who tries to extract a thorn with another thon knowing that the latter will join the former (and cause main pain). (Nahjul Balagha Part 1, The Sermons n.d., 121)

I see that you are like lizards who are sticking to each other. You neither take the truth in your hand nor forbid oppression and injustice. You are neither a steadfast warrior in the battlefield nor a dependable companion in peacetime. I am tired of you and I feel lonely despite your large numbers.

O those whose bodies are together, but their aspirations are divided. Your speech softens the stones and your actions encourage the enemy to attack. Those who call get disappointed. Those who deal with you cannot feel assured. To talk glibly and keep others in dark is your practice. You asked me for more time like a debtor, who is indebted for a long time, asks his lender for more time. How can you guard a land or country if you cannot secure your own home? Under whose command can you do *jihad* after me? The real swindled person is the one whom you have deceived. If you become a part of someone, it is as if he gets an arrow which never hits its target. (al-Radi n.d.)

Chapter 8 – After Sayyidna ‘Ali

This chapter

Index of Quranic verses

Al-Ahzab, 33:10-11, 31
Al-Ahzab, 33:38, 107
Al-Ahzab, 33:38-39, 62
Al-Ahzab, 33:62, 48
Al-Baqara, 2:207, 160
Al-Fath, 48:16, 165
Al-Fath, 48:29, 84
Al-Hashr, 59:9, 66
Al-Hujraat, 49:9, 57, 166
Al-Imran, 3:144, 41, 54
Al-Imran, 3:37, 36
Al-Maedah, 5:33, 129
Al-Maedah, 5:67, 62
Al-Tawba, 9:29, 166
Al-Tawba, 9:34, 61, 70
Al-Tawba, 9:40, 50
Al-Zalzala, 98:7-8, 174
Fatir, 35:43, 2
Saba, 34:19, 163

Index of People and Places

‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas, 145, 155
‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar, 107, 111
‘Abdullah bin Abu Sufyan, 14
‘Abdullah bin Jubair, 29
‘Abdullah bin S’ad bin Abi Sarah, 118, 126
‘Abdullah bin Saba, 133, 161
‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf, 79, 99, 103, 111
‘Abdur Rahman bin Muljam, 160
‘Abudur Rahman bin Abi Bakr, 106
‘Amar bin Jamruz, 146
‘Ammar bin Yasir, 143, 145, 154
‘Amr bin ‘Auf, 22
‘Amr bin ’Abdu Wudd, 31
‘Amr bin al-‘Aas, 91, 126, 154
‘Amr bin Bakr, 173
‘Utbah bin Rab’iah, 28
Abu ‘Ubaidah bin Jarrah, 90
Abu Dhar Ghiffari, 18
Abu Juhayfah, 108
Abu Musa al-Ash’ari, 155
Abu Sufyan bin Harb, 71, 81, 115
Burak bin ‘Abdullah, 173
Fatima bint Asad, 7, 14
Ghafqi bin Harb, 137
Ibn Khaldun, 149
Ibn Muljam, 173
J’adeh bin Hubairah, 174
Jarir bin ‘Abdullah, 152
Jundab bin ‘Abdullah, 174
Khadija, 8, 16
Khalid bin Walid, 39, 58, 90
Kulthum bin al-Hidam, 22
Malik bin Sinan, 30
Marhab, 34
Marwan bin al-Hakam, 118, 125
Miqda bin al-Aswad, 112
Mu’adh bin Jabal, 10
Mu’awiya bin Abi Sufyan, 70, 118, 140, 151
Mughirah bin Sh’uba, 105, 106, 107
Muhammad bin al-Hanfiyah, 176
Muhammad bin Muslimah, 38
Mus’ab bin ‘Umair, 30
N’uman bin Muqarin, 98
Nailah bint Al-Furafisah, 133
Qasam bin ‘Abbas, 151
Ruqaiya, 77, 114
S’ad bin Abi Waqqas, 97, 111
S’aid bin Zaid, 111
Sahl bin Hunaif, 23, 143, 151
Salman Farsi, 31
Shah Waliyullah Dehlavi, 23, 149
Shaibah bin Rab’iah, 28

Sufyan bin ‘Uyaynah, 165
Suhaib bin Sinan, 111
Suhail bin ‘Amr, 33
Tabuk, 151
Talha bin ‘Ubaidullah, 30, 98, 111, 143, 146
Umm Kulthum, 77, 115
Walid bin ‘Uqbah, 118, 125
Walid bin ‘Utbah, 28
Yazid bin Abi Sufyan, 168
Yazid bin Mu’awiyah, 147
Zainab, 77
Zubair bin Awwam, 37, 79, 111, 143, 146

Important Dates and Events

Hijri Date	Gregorian Date	Event
19th Dhul Hijjah 35	17th June 656	Death of ‘Uthman
26th Dhul Hijjah 35	24th June 656	Bay’ah at the hands of ‘Ali
Jumadil Aaakhir 36	November 656	Battle of *Jamal*
12th Rajab 36	3rd January 657	‘Ali reached Kufa from Basra

21st Ramadan 40	27th January 661	‘Ali died

Works Cited

al-Hadid, Izz al-Din ibn Abi. *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah.* 2nd. Beirut, Lebanon: Mu'assasat al-A'lamī lil-Maṭbu'at, 2004.

Ali, Muhammad Kurd. *Al idara al islamiya fi iz al arab (The Islamic Management under Arabs).* n.d.

Ali, Syed Ameer. *A Short History of the Saracenes.* New York: Macmillan & Co, 1900.

—. *The Spirit of Islam.* Lahore: Sang-E-Meel Publications, 2005.

al-Radi, Sayyid Sharif. *Nahj al-Balaghah.* n.d.

al-Tabari, Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir. *Tarikh al-Rasul wa al-Muluk.* n.d.

al-Zayyat, Ahmad Hasan. *Tarikh al-Adab al-'Arabi.* Cairo, 2004.

Amin, Ahmad. *Fajr al-Islam.* Cairo: Lajnat al-Talif Wa al-Tarjuman , 1928.

'Aqqad, 'Abbas Mahmud. *al-'Abqariyat al-Islamiyah.* 1957.

Baghdadi, Muhammad ibn S'ad. *Kitab Tabaqat al-Kubra.* n.d.

Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Ismail. *Sahih Bukhari.* 6th. Translated by Muhammad Mohsin Khan. 9 vols. Lahore: Kazi Publications, 1986.

Dawud, Abu. *Sunan Abu Dawud.* Riyadh: Darussalam, 2008.

Hakim Nishapuri, Abu 'Abdullah. *Mustadrak al-Hakim.* n.d.

Hanbal, Ahmad bin Muhammad bin. *Musnad Ahmad.* Riyadh: Darussalam, 2012.

Hitti, Philip Khury. *A Short History of the arabs.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1943.

Ibn Kathir, Hafiz. *Al Bidayah wan Nihayah.* n.d.

Ibn Khaldun, Abd Ar Rahman bin Muhammad. *The Muqaddimah - An Introduction to History.* Translated by Franz Rosenthal. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967.

Kopelman Foundation. *Jewish Encyclopedia.* 1906. http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/15027-worship-idol (accessed August 4, 2014).

McCasland, Selby Vernon. *Religions of the World.* New York: Random House, 1969.

Muir, Sir William. *Annals of the Early Caliphate.* London: Smith, Elder and CO., 1883.

Muslim, Abu al-Husayn. *Sahih Muslim.* 10th. Translated by Abdul Hamid Siddiqi. Vol. 4. New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 1994.

Muttaqi, 'Ali. *Kanz al-Ummal.* n.d.

Nadvi, Saiyid Sulaiman. *Hadhrat Ayesha Siddiqa - Her Life and Work.* Translated by Syed athar Husain. Karachi: Darul Ishaat, 2000.

Nadwi, Syed Abul Hasan 'Ali. *Muhammad Rasulullah, The Apostle of Mercy.* Lucknow: Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 2001.

—. *The Four Pillars of Islam.* 3rd. Karachi, 1988.

"Nahjul Balagha Part 1, The Sermons ." n.d.

"Nahjul Balagha Part 1, The Sermons." n.d.

"Nahjul Balagha Part 1, The Sermons." n.d.

"Nahjul Balagha Part 1, The Sermons." n.d.

Nomani, Shibli. *Al Farooq.* Karachi: Darul Ishaat, 2011.

O'Malley, L.S.S. *Popular Hinduism: The Religion of the Masses.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935.

Suyuti, Jalal al-Din. *Al-Durr Al-Manthur.* n.d.

Tabrazi, Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah Khatib. *Mishkat al-Masabih.* Translated by James Robson. 2 vols. Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, 1990.

Tirmidhi, Hafiz Abu 'Eisa Mohammad ibn 'Eisa. *Jami' At-Tirmidhi.* Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007.

Vaidya, C.V. *History of Mediaeval Hindu india, Being a History of India from 600 to 1200 A.D.* Vol. 1. 3 vols. Poona City: The Oriental Book Supplying Agency, 1921.